

THE TRUE CHRIST
AND OTHER STUDIES IN
"WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE"



W. L. WALKER



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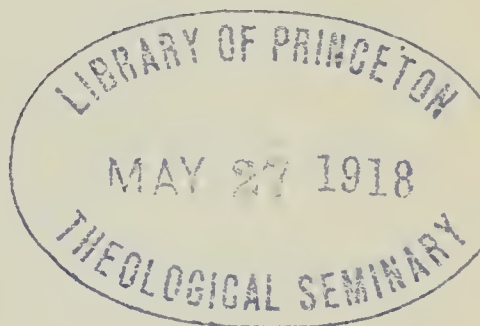


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THE TRUE CHRIST

AND OTHER STUDIES IN

“WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE”



BY

✓
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PREFACE

THE chapters that follow seek to treat some of the more important religious subjects in the light of the present. They are written under a deep conviction of the supremacy of Truth—the nature of which is first dealt with—and with the single desire to apprehend and state the truth so that it shall approve itself and be found helpful.

Chapter IV. on “ The True Christ ” which, as being in some respects central, supplies the leading title of the Book, was originally given in part as a lecture to the Glasgow University Society of St. Ninian. It has been written in view of recent theories concerning Christ, especially of the Eschatological or Apocalyptic conception which some writers have made prominent, and which it certainly seems must, to a considerable extent, be accepted as being, at least, the *representation* of the first three Gospels. Its bearing on the person of Christ is discussed. In the chapter that follows on “ The True Teacher ” the same subject comes up for further consideration, and recent objections to Christ’s teaching are dealt with. These chapters were written before I had

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the benefit of reading Schweitzer's recently published volume entitled *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, or the careful study of *The Eschatology of the Gospels* by Dr. von Dobschütz, in recent numbers of *The Expositor*, to both of which I would refer those who desire to see a fuller treatment of the subject, although there is not a little in Schweitzer to which I do not subscribe.

“ Fernihirst,” Shettleston,

Glasgow,

July, 1910.

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THE TRUE CHRIST

AND OTHER STUDIES

CHAPTER I

WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE TRUE

“A God of Truth.”

“Buy the Truth and sell it not.”

“The lip of Truth shall be established for ever.”

“Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother.”

“My Kingdom is of the Truth.”

“What is Truth?”

“WHATSOEVER things are true,” says St. Paul, “think on these things”—meditate on them, cherish the thought of them—and, he urges, in so far as they are practical things, “do them.”

The Truth has an inexpressible charm for every soul that is true. Over all souls she wields a mystic power; all must bow to her authority, whether they love her or not. She has a Divine right to command, to direct, to judge, to condemn and to acquit. She is the only possessor of such a right. There is, indeed, no authority that can make itself felt by man save that which comes to him in the guise of truth. The Truth is not merely intellectual but moral and practical as well. To seek Truth wherever she may be found, to follow Truth where'er she leads, to do Truth whatever the consequences, may be said to sum up the whole duty of man. “Whatsoever things

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are true " may well, therefore, be the primary subjects of our thought and meditation and practice.

But we are met by Pilate's question, "*What is Truth?*" and we find the philosophers still disputing concerning the answer. There are some who question whether Truth be really an object which the human vision can discern. We must admit, I think, that *absolute Truth*, Truth in its perfect purity, is not within our reach at present, only practical truth—Truth as she robes herself for man, and as our organ of mental and moral vision enables us to behold her. Absolute Truth is the light ineffable, and, although the mystics of all time have claimed to be able to come into immediate union with it, they have never derived much real knowledge therefrom; they have only proved how truly ineffable it is. Not only is it that

Life, like a dome of many coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.

but our inner organ of vision, like the outer eye, has been slowly formed under certain mundane influences. It has been formed, as the Pragmatists remind us, under the influences of human ends and purposes which have been met for us. But, as it has at the same time taken shape through its interaction with the Reason-ordered Universe, reflecting, or, rather, taking up into itself the reason manifested therein, we may safely trust it as far as it can carry us. Truth is no doubt also, as we are frequently told, that which we find *to work*—to answer our purposes. But it

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is, at the same time, something very much more than that, and it may be something very different. The burglar's key may *work*, and so be that particular truth which fits the lock and nefariously opens the safe, but there is surely a higher truth which condemns him as a thief—a truth to which he is not true. We may have a myriad of truths that work and yet not possess the Truth. Truth is not just that which meets our personal purposes; it depends altogether on what those purposes may be. It is that which we can see to be true in itself, *however* it may affect our purposes, and its perception ought to have the effect of making our aims and purposes true. The truth will always be found to *work* for the accomplishment of such purposes as are themselves true. But, as Eucken remarks, "the strongest motive in the pursuit of truth is the desire to get beyond the small and narrow circle of the merely human, and to gain full participation in the life of things themselves, in the breadth and truth of the Universe."

The place given to Truth in the Bible is remarkable, and is one of the evidences of inspiration. God is "the God of Truth," a God who is wholly true. Jesus was the highest truth incarnate. He is the King of the true. "Doing the truth in love" is the mark of His followers, and He left them "the Spirit of Truth" to be their perpetual Guide, leading them into "all the truth." However imperfectly this supreme

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regard for Truth as Truth may have been shown by Christians, it is something to have this high ideal set before us, and if in the past there has been failure to seek and follow Truth alone, it is for us to try to remove the reproach from the present. One of the most cheering features of our time, indeed, is the growing regard for Truth, although it may be accompanied by the danger of resting in those half-truths which are said to be worse than a lie. It may sometimes cause the pain of the surrender of forms of belief once held as Truth, and for a time the soul may feel itself adrift on a shoreless sea, or entangled amidst difficulties out of which there seems to be no egress. But that sea is not shoreless and those difficulties cannot hold you for ever. Away, it may be in the far distance, lies the firm land of Truth, if only you will press forward.

Argue not

Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
Right onward.

In such circumstances we may call to mind the experience of Columbus, when he found himself entangled in the Sargasso Sea in the midst of the ocean, to the westward of the Canary Islands. As far as eye could see the surface was thickly covered with weed, through which it seemed hopeless to seek to penetrate. To his sailors the attempt seemed even impious ; the Almighty had shown His anger at their endeavour to peer

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into His secrets. Columbus himself feared that these weeds might indicate the proximity of dangerous rocks on which his vessel might be wrecked. But, strong in his faith in an undiscovered land, he steered right onward, carefully sounding from time to time, till in a few days they got clear of the weeds, out again into the free ocean, and in due time reached the western shore he was seeking. So it ever is in the search for Truth, if we are in earnest and will but persevere, with our minds open to such guidance, Divine and human, as we can find, carefully taking soundings as we proceed, but never losing faith in the reality and attainability of Truth. We shall not indeed reach all truth, or even the whole truth on any particular subject; but we shall find what we need for mental rest and true practical life.

But *What is Truth? and how are we to reach it?* Without going into the depths of Philosophy, we may take the old simple answer that the true is the Real, and that Truth for us is the agreement of our thought and life with Reality. But the Real must be taken as meaning not merely "Experience," or the actual, but also the Ideal. This may seem a contradiction, since the Real and the Ideal are so often contrasted. But for everything that is actual there is an Ideal which is its Truth. The actual may not by any means be the true. In history, of course, the truth is what actually happened, and the true in fact is what actually is, although it may be that, in the

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light of the Ideal, neither can be rightly called true. The artist, the poet, the mechanic, the preacher, has his ideal conception which his actual production may be far from realising. We may view it understandingly, and describe it correctly in point of fact, and this would be the truth concerning it in the lower usage of the word. But its creator knows that, in a higher sense, his work, perhaps, comes far short of its truth. So in the relation to life and, indeed, to everything; there is not only the actual truth of fact, but the higher ideal truth to be thought of. The *form* must also be distinguished from the substance in history and in all thought and life. The formal statement may not only come far short of expressing the truth, but, even though it should prove to be formally false, it may be substantially true. On the other hand a statement may be formally or verbally true, but substantially false. Truth is more than mere verbal veracity. There is indeed a deeper truth in everything than that which is immediately manifest. Take the life and work of a person in history. Certain facts are manifest; we can note and describe them; and, so far, we have seen and noted the truth concerning the person. But there may be much that we have not seen, or have seen imperfectly, much of the inner spirit and aims of the person that we have failed to discern, and so our account of him falls very far short of the truth concerning him. So of those

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living and acting around us, of our own selves, and of the commonest objects in the world in which we live. We may truly describe them so far, but there is always a deeper something which we fail to grasp—a something which makes them what they are, and in which their real truth resides. What we see always carries us to the unseen; the form is but a temporary manifestation of the substance; the finite lands us in the infinite; the temporal in the eternal.

How are we to get at the Truth, and how can we know when we have found her? In one aspect the Truth is always seeking to get at us. All truth is of the nature of Revelation. But just as there must be eyes formed to behold the objects in the world around us, so there must be an inner eye that looks out for and seeks to read the revelation. The revelation is not wholly in the objects, but in what they indicate. Science describes the objects, but the mind seeks the truth that they reveal. Sometimes the truth *comes* to us, dawns upon us, shines on us, without any conscious effort of our own or immediate seeking on our part:

Think ye 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

This is *intuition*; but it does not come miraculously; there has been a long preparation for it in the race and often also in the individual. There are other truths that have to be long and

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earnestly sought for, in the quest of which all our intellectual powers must be employed, and the endeavour strenuously made to free the mind from all personal bias and unwillingness to believe. We often go without the Truth because we are too indolent or indifferent to seek her earnestly, or because we are prejudiced against her and unwilling to receive her. There is certainly a moral element involved in the search for and the reception of Truth. "We have ears that hear not and eyes that see not." Truth reveals herself to those who love her; she comes to those who will give her a home.

It has been often said that the Truth is such that we cannot but know her when we see her; she shines in her own light. But this is only true of certain kinds of Truth,—axioms and practical Truth, moral Truth and Truth of duty. Of other truths that other saying is more just: "Truth lies at the bottom of the well." For scientific truth there must be observation, experiment, verification, pushed always farther and farther back, with, in fact, no end to it. We are always thus learning more and more of the truth of the natural world. For historical truth there must be the weighing and sifting of evidence in an unbiassed critical spirit. For the perception of the ideal there must be inner intellectual and moral discernment, and a looking at individual things in the light of the whole. For truth beyond what we immediately see and know, there must

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be inference therefrom and logical reasoning based on fact. Starting with some measure of truth, we can reach larger measures, always something more ultimate. And we know that we have found truth—what at least is Truth for us—when we reach mental rest or satisfaction—when we find something which harmonises with our mental and moral constitution and with all the rest that we know. It is as if it were a light coming from without which blends with the light within, which is essentially one with all Truth. This is the reality indicated by Browning when he says :

There is an inmost centre in us all
Where Truth abides in fulness ; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear conception which is Truth.

Never till we reach this harmony can we feel that we have found the Truth that we are seeking. And we can only have this sense of harmony, this satisfying vision of Truth, *within ourselves* ; we cannot get it from others. As Emerson has said, the Temple of the highest Truth stands open night and day before every man, but “ guarded by one stern condition—it is an intuition.” It cannot be received at second-hand. It is not so much instruction as provocation we can receive from another. “ What he announces I must find true in me, or reject ; and, on his word, or as his second, be he who he may, I can accept nothing. The absence of this primary faith is the presence of degradation.”

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But it may be asked, "Must I not accept what one, who I have reason to believe *knows*, may affirm, simply on his word." Certainly we must do so, in the highest as well as in the commonest matters. We must beware of refusing to credit a statement because we have not as yet experienced its truth, and there are some things of which we cannot have personal experience. All the same, nothing is truth for me, in the most vital sense, unless I myself see it to be true.

This is why so much religious truth that we "believe" remains so uninfluential. We do not so see and feel it to be true that it becomes a vital part of ourselves, an active power within us, as all perceived truth becomes. What we take at second-hand can never become part of our own souls and bear fruit in our experience. We must accept facts on the words of others worthy of credit, but we must, where it is possible, and always in matters relating to our own life, verify the fact in our experience. Another man's vision cannot be mine, nor can another person's experience be real to me, any more than his cure can be my remedy, unless it be repeated in my own case. Verification, where it is possible, is thus necessary to our complete conviction of having found the truth.

A modern philosophical writer (Eucken), with much knowledge of past endeavours after the truth, tells us that we must seek it in a new way. We must seek it, primarily, not without, but

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within ourselves, not as a matter of the intellect merely, or of any one or more faculties alone, but of *the life*, as something belonging to a higher and wider Life which is seeking to realise itself in us. No doubt what is thus said is true. But it implies just that distinction between the actual and the ideal which has been insisted on, and that there is a faculty in man capable of perceiving the ideal. In what other way could we possibly know what the higher and wider Life moves us to? The ideal, however, is not a mere intellectual perception; there is also a sense or feeling of what is true and good, and an attraction that draws us upward towards itself. That there is a higher Life seeking to live in us, Christianity also teaches.

Let us wake up to the fact that Christianity, instead of fearing or being shy of any kind of truth, calls upon men to seek Truth earnestly and to follow it when found. Christ's Kingdom is that of "the Truth," and we cannot be loyal to Him unless Truth, as Truth, be one of the first things in our love and devotion. We need to obey the Apostolic injunction to think seriously and earnestly on, and to give our minds to, "whatsoever things are true"—to seek for them, find them out and ponder them till we realise them and live by them. We are too ready to be content with simply "believing." For the want of "thinking," the truth does not become our own vital possession, and, therefore, our professed

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beliefs often fail us in the time of greatest need—when things come home to our very selves—in the experience of disappointment, loss and death, for example. Nor does the Truth so possess us that we must speak it whatever may be the cost to ourselves—wisely, of course, and with due regard for others—but, still, plainly and faithfully as befits the Truth, remembering that “it is our life” and that

'Tis man's perdition to be safe
When for the Truth he ought to die.

“Whatsoever things are true.” There *are* true things and we can know them to be true. We can get the truth concerning some of the highest things that bear on life. To deny that there is Truth is to deny God. To despair of finding it is the outer darkness of the soul. To ignore it is to walk wilfully in darkness, not knowing whither we go. To seek it and follow it when we have found it, is to find fulness of life, to become ourselves “lights in the world,” and to tread “the way everlasting.” It is Truth that gives *value* to everything. It is itself the highest value. For it is Reality, and what signifies anything if it be not *real*? How can it otherwise *work* effectively or answer its purpose? How can anything endure if it be not true? It is Truth that makes man free of the Universe, free within himself, free, as far as may be, of God—a partaker of God and of Eternal Life.

CHAPTER II

FREEDOM THROUGH THE TRUTH

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

“If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

ONE aspect of the ideal truth of Life that men have been quick to discern is that of Freedom. An instinct for Freedom is deeply implanted in our nature. Liberty has always been a word to charm with. The banner bearing that device has never lacked followers. Sometimes, indeed, men have mistaken licence for liberty, or have only passed from one form of bondage into another and possibly worse form of it, as was so terribly proved in France, when under the banner of Liberty men marched triumphantly to the sound of music, all unconscious of the chains of deepening degradation with which they had bound themselves. Yet man is meant to be free, and

He that worketh high and wise,
Nor pauseth in His plan,
Will take the sun out of the skies
Ere freedom out of man.

Freedom, however, is a matter of *degrees*, and real Freedom is always gained through the Truth. Without the truth men are in the hard bondage of ignorance. Picture the contrast between

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savage and civilised man in relation to the powers of Nature ; the savage crushed before them because ignorant of how to employ them for his benefit, dreading the lightning as the destroying dart of an angry deity ; the civilised man employing it to carry his messages round the world, to drive his machinery, and to convey himself whither he will. What has made the difference ? Simply *the truth* as the knowledge of nature. The truth makes man free of the universe so that his life in its material interests and value is always rising higher and higher. The wonders of wireless telegraphy, the almost incredible voyages of aeroplanes, the half-human automatic machinery of our age, are examples of how increasing freedom comes to man through the truth. What possibilities advancing knowledge may yet open up, who can say ?

Or think of a people under tyranny. It is the policy of tyrants to keep their subjects in ignorance. We think of ecclesiastical Rome in the past and of political Russia in the present. But let the truth enter, and the ideal will be discerned. It will become a power in the people's hearts which will nerve them to seek their freedom, and

Freedom's battle once begun,
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won.

Not always, however, in the form in which it was desired, and not always is it complete or lasting, as witness Poland and Bohemia.

Freedom Through the Truth

But freedom, as has been said, is a matter of degrees ; there are higher and lower kinds of freedom, and we may be free in one respect while bound in another. Those who are or who believe themselves to be free in certain cherished respects are often slow to admit their bondage in other respects. It is for the lower and more external kinds of freedom that our nature directly craves ; the deeper, diviner element in the soul must be awakened ere the higher and true freedom of the man is so much as longed for. Those Jews to whom Jesus spoke were indignant with Him because He offered them freedom. In repudiating His offer they forgot their history and their actual position at the time, saying, “ We never were in bondage to any man ; how sayest thou then, Ye shall be free ? ” At that very moment the strongest desire of the heart of the nation was for freedom from the Roman power. So strong is the instinct for freedom that it is hard for men to believe that they are in bondage unless they are bodily confined. It was freedom in the highest sense that Jesus offered them ; but they had no desire for it because they did not feel their need of it. Let us follow the idea of freedom in its various degrees or aspects till we reach that in which man’s highest and truest freedom consists.

1. There is *bodily freedom as opposed to captivity*. But the prisoner in chains may be a freer man than the judge in whose presence he stands bound, like Paul, before whom Felix trembled,

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or like the same Paul in his Roman prison, while Nero on the imperial throne was dominated by his unnatural vices and haunted by constant terrors. As our own Lovelace sang,

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage ;

* * *

If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty.

2. *Personal freedom as opposed to slavery.*

But the slave may be a far freer man than his master. We think of Uncle Tom, whipped like a dog and lying in his miserable hovel, suffering in his body, but in his soul ascending to heaven ; while his master sat at his luxurious table eating and drinking, till he fell dead drunk under it. There is no question who was the free *man*.

3. *Political freedom as opposed to tyranny.*

The aspiration for such freedom is a high and worthy one. It is something always to be won in larger measure, and it needs to be carefully seen to that it is not apparent only. Men may be politically free while *life itself* is not really free to them. If a man cannot get work, of how much value to him is his free citizenship ? Yet even under tyrants there have been many noble men, and while we rejoice in the large measure of liberty which we possess, we have only to read the newspapers, or to look around us, or to hear some drunken, rowdy band singing, " Britons never,

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never shall be slaves," to realise how far short political may come of real freedom.

4. *Intellectual freedom*—liberty of thought and speech—is another aspect of freedom to be highly prized. Without it the truth cannot come to men as it seeks to come to them. Yet mere freedom of thought cannot guard us from bondage. The freest thinker is not always, by any means, the truest thinker. History and experience show that he may be firmly bound by the cords of ignorance or prejudice and led into the strangest errors; or, while free in mind, he may be in moral bondage, dominated by some craving or liking of his lower nature.

5. *Moral freedom* is higher; when the will is not subject to the senses, the appetites or passions, the likes and dislikes of the nature, but follows the Law of Duty with uncompromising strictness. Yet it may all be done under effort; the *man within* may not be wholly *free*. He may be outwardly free, yet inwardly evil thoughts, desires, ambitions, covetous wishes, selfishness, may reign. Or he may render a slavish submission to the world's standards, opinions and practices in all that is deemed not morally wrong, even though he has an underlying feeling of its wrongness; he may be a slave of conventionalism, apart from its relation to morality. He may have his own standard of morality and be his own judge, his conscience approving, because unenlightened. Even if truly free in relation to

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man, he may be in bondage in relation to the higher will of God. There may be an element in his soul still in darkness ; in relation to his innermost and highest life the man may be self-bound.

6. There is a higher *freedom of the spirit*—of the inner self, carrying with it in due time, the fulness of moral freedom. It was this that Jesus offered those Jews. He stood in that freedom Himself as a Son in the Father's house, and it was in this freedom that He sought to make men share. This is the freedom of the man in the inner principle of his life—freedom from all that would prevent him from realising the true ideal of his manhood as a son of God. It is the complete *Freedom of the Will*. Man is ideally free, yet he may be actually in bondage. He is not compelled to act or to choose under any inevitable sequences, physical or psychical. Determinism is as false as it is degrading. It would unmake our manhood, turning us into mere puppets pulled by invisible strings, not men at all, but parts of nature's mechanism. But, while we are free from all constraint outside ourselves, we are not always free *within ourselves*—not always free to choose the highest and best, the true and right. An inner liking may keep us from it ; we are in bondage to that. The lower nature may hold us down. There is, therefore, such a thing as a "bondage of the will," when the man is so under the influence of some element of his lower nature, or of the desire for earthly things, that, while he

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is free from all outward constraint, he cannot effectually choose and follow the call of God in his higher nature. He needs to be set free from this inner bondage, and again it is "the truth" that can set him free.

"A man," said Epictetus, is only free when "whatever is the will of God is his will too, and whatever is not God's will is not his will." This was a true definition of the highest freedom, *provided* that acceptance of the will of God is not a matter of necessity and submission merely, as it was with many of the Stoics. This would be the self-contradictory thing, freedom under compulsion. A man is only truly free when the will of God is not merely accepted, but loved and desired as that which is wholly good—when the love of God, of His Will, and of all that He is, becomes the active principle of the life. Then God's will is for the man not merely law but love and life. He has the will of God, as far as may be, as his will; in the highest sense possible to man he is one with God.

This is the freedom that Christ confers. It is the freedom of a son in the Father's house. As He said to those Jews: "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." His was the perfect freedom of a Son, as contrasted with those who were at the best but servants, under legal bondage. And being only under law, with no adequate motive power for the free service of God, they came, more or less, under bondage to

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sin. Only the freedom of Sonship, the love of the Father as the ruling principle of the life, stronger than all else in the man, can set us free from sin, which is in its essence yielding to the lower self.

And it is the *truth* that confers this highest freedom on men, the truth concerning God which Jesus declared and manifested in His life and death as the true Son of the eternal Father.

Apart from this knowledge of God, we are in bondage in two respects :

1. Of *ignorance*—not knowing what God is or what is His will for us, how high and good it is ; not knowing the possibilities of our own nature, and the Divine ideal of life in relation to God and man. Even men like Epictetus were more or less under this bondage of ignorance.

2. Of *sin*. Without the knowledge of God in His truth and of His will for us, we have only self and the world and our fellow men on the same level as ourselves, to inspire our life. We have nothing that can effectually raise us above the mere self-life or world-life. Even if we knew our highest duty we should have nothing to lift us into free compliance with it.

To know the truth as Jesus declared and manifested it ; to know God as Jesus revealed Him in His life and by His cross, is to be led to love God supremely, and to love God supremely is to realise the freedom of a son in the Father's great House, where all is good because it is our

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Father's loving will, and because our chief interest is to realise that ideal of life which Jesus in His perfect Sonship set before us, in which we know all true and lasting good is centred. If we believe in God as Christ has revealed Him ; if we let the love of God as He makes Him known enter to possess our hearts, this Divine Light dispels our darkness, this Divine power breaks our bonds, and makes us truly free. It frees us from the dominion of sin, of the lower self, of the world, and of unreasonable fears and anxieties. The man who really believes in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who believes that His nature is love and His will ever wise and good, and who commits his whole life and interests to that loving and all-wise Father with the confidence of a son, need fear nothing. Jesus feared nothing ; His Father's will was always good, however it might seem. Although He naturally shrank from drinking the last and bitterest cup of death, yet whenever it was made certain to Him that it was His Father's will, He accepted it. It was the conviction that all was the will of God for Him, with which His own will was one, that led to His perfect obedience unto death and His complete victory over all that *seems* against man in this world.

Still, in our case the freedom is not immediately realised in all its completeness. Christ, therefore, said to those Jews, "*If ye continue* in my word—ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make

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you free.” It is that personal knowledge of the truth already spoken of as that which makes it our own—a matter, not merely of acceptance on the word of Christ even, but of our own experience that brings the freedom. And it takes time for this realisation. Moreover, habits may have been formed, which are so impressed on our nature that they cannot be eradicated all at once. There may also be mental or even physical weaknesses which prevent us from rising into and living continuously in the full freedom of sonship. Our conscious unworthiness and our sins and shortcomings also dim the glory of the liberty of the sons of God. We have, however, learnt the secret and we must *continue* in Christ’s word. We must carefully guard the measure of freedom we have gained, and constantly seek to realise that complete freedom of a son which is our true manhood as conceived by God our Heavenly Father. And we shall do this the more completely the truth concerning God as revealed in Christ is one of the “true things” on which we “think,” the more fully it possesses our minds, sinks into our hearts and becomes part of ourselves. In every aspect of life freedom through the truth is a growing and increasing freedom. It comes to us according as we love, seek and follow “whatsoever things are true.”

CHAPTER III

THE TRUE GOD

“This is the true God and eternal life.”

“Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.”

THE existence of Truth, the fact that there is a realm of Truth in some measure open to man implies a Spiritual Source of the Universe. It implies a Divine primal Mind, which has so expressed itself that its manifestations can be perceived and rendered in mental terms by our minds formed in its image. It implies *the reality of God*. If there had been no primal mind expressing itself in the universe, mind could never have become organised in man. All our reason is but a finite and imperfect transcript of the Infinite Reason and has been derived solely from our relations to a Reason-ordered Universe. That God *is* is one of the things that are most certainly true. But *What is God?* How are we to think of Him? He is the Infinite Reason; but we crave for some fuller knowledge of Him.

It was a bold thing that Paul did when he stood up to tell the wise men of Athens the nature of the true God. The philosophers of an earlier time, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, had

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had some splendid visions of the truth, but they had not done much to enlighten the people. In the world of Paul's day there were "gods many and lords many"; in Athens it was said to be easier to find a god than a man. There was nothing that the world of Paul's day so greatly needed as the knowledge of the true God, and there is nothing that the world of our own day more greatly needs. For it is only the thought of a God, present indeed within, but in every respect above us, that can uplift humanity, and lead it onwards to its goal.

Present-day philosophy seeks to support religion, but its exponents have such disputations amongst themselves that those who have not specialised in their lore scarce know what to make of it. They seem all to have a measure of truth, but none of them, perhaps, the whole truth. But, although we may have doubts as to how far "the Absolute" of some modern philosophers can answer to the idea of "God," whether indeed it be not a gulf rather than a God, it is cheering to see how almost all, whether Absolute or Personal Idealists, Ideal Realists, Spiritual Monists or Pluralists, Pragmatists and Humanists, seek to maintain in their own way the reality of God, the value of Faith and Religion, of Freedom and Immortality, without meaning to sacrifice either Divine or human personality. Not only the old Atheism but the old Agnosticism is being left behind. There may be at the same time,

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however, a good deal of practical undefined agnosticism. But the theologian and the person whose direct interest is religion will do well to hold fast to the fact of Revelation, only it must be more broadly and more truly conceived. We can only know God in so far as He reveals Himself. He is partly revealed in nature ; but if we stop with nature we shall come short of the knowledge of a God who is really higher than ourselves. For man is more than nature. Paul certainly pointed the Athenians to God as the Creator of the world who, just because He is " Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; neither is He served by men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing that He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." He declared His omnipresence and nearness to all, " for in Him we live and move and have our being " ; and he quoted the saying of certain of their own poets : " For we are also His offspring." So far, his teaching might be expressed in terms of the Eastern fable of the fishes who sought to behold the sea :

O ye who seek to solve the knot,
Ye live in God, yet know Him not ;
Ye sit upon the river's brink,
Yet crave in vain a drop to drink ;
Ye dwell beside a countless store,
Yet perish hungry at the door.

The revelation of God in nature is that of an omnipresent, all-embracing, all-working Power, an Infinite Reason which is manifested in the

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unvarying order of the world, our relation to which has made us rational, and which has wrought on till in man a moral and spiritual nature has been produced.

But Paul went on to declare that in Jesus Christ God had revealed Himself in His moral character, as the God of Righteousness. If in the past He had seemed to slumber, He was now awake ; if He had overlooked the ignorance of the past, He would do so no longer ; for He had “ appointed a day in which He would judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He had ordained ; whereof He had given assurance to all men in that He had raised Him from the dead.” Righteousness was the ruling passion in Paul’s soul, and as he looked around on that world of many gods and of much wickedness, his spirit was mightily stirred to declare to it a God of Righteousness who should judge the world righteously. That was an aspect of the true God which that world needed greatly to know, and it is an aspect of God which should shine upon the men of all time with the clearness of the sun in the heavens. We cannot have any doubt that the true God is a God of righteousness. For He is the Power through whose working that moral sense has been developed in man which makes him feel the inviolable and eternal supremacy of righteousness. Paul as a preacher of the Gospel at the same time declared God’s mercifulness, and, had he been suffered to give

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the whole of his message, he would have shown that the God whom he preached was the God of Love. But it was *Righteousness* that was needed there and then to be specially emphasised.

But we can imagine those philosophers of Athens asking, Why, if God be the God of Righteousness and everywhere present, He had not sooner revealed Himself as such, and why He should leave it to a Jewish tent-maker to declare it to the world? Paul would have answered by telling them that he stood there as a member of a nation to whom and through whom God had been revealing Himself, and whose full and final revelation had been given through Jesus Christ. He might not have given them a philosophical explanation of this method of the Divine procedure, but have said simply that it was so "in the wisdom of God." That same question, however, is asked by many to-day. In view of the history of the past and of the actual world around us, many who seek Truth find it difficult to believe that God is a God of righteousness everywhere present, and still harder, perhaps, to believe that He is the God of Love. The difficulty is a very real one, not to be glossed over or met by mere assertion. It is not merely the presence of moral evil that creates it; for we cannot conceive of a world of free beings, gradually developed from a lower condition, without at the same time seeing the possibility of moral evil appearing. Nor is it merely the existence of what are termed

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“ natural evils ” ; because the world must exist under such a regular and inviolable action of forces as shall conserve it and meet the needs of the whole, but which, at the same time, cannot but make occasional suffering and loss inevitable to individuals. To say that “ the world outside man is not moral,” is to state a truism, and is no argument against a good God. It is doubtless “ pure irrelevance to talk of ethics to an earthquake,” but no one in his senses would ever dream of doing so, or expect to witness ethical practice on the part of a material universe. God’s Universe is not like a child’s toy, made safe for fear of hurting him, but for that very reason of little practical use. It exists for purposes wider than my individual interests, under the straightforward action of physical forces with no moral consideration in them and without respect of persons.

When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease if you go by ?

There could be no stable physical Universe otherwise, and such facts suggest no limit save that of rationality on either the Love or the Power of God. We naturally shrink from the fearful conflict, and even *apparent* waste, that have marked the course of ascending life, and which are still features of the living world. But the laws which operate therein are as necessary and as inviolable as those which uphold the inanimate sphere.

Moreover, although the physical order is non-moral in itself, we can see that there are high

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moral purposes served by it. If there had been no suffering, sorrow and death coming to men through the natural order, human life would have been a very much poorer, colder, harder thing than it is. This finite world would have contented us; the higher qualities of sympathy and sacrifice would not have been developed, and the riches of God's infinite Love would never have been known. Selfish pleasure, childish gratification, would have been man's *summum bonum*. Pain is often hard to endure or to witness, and it does not always have its designed effect. But could we pray God to keep it wholly out of His world?

The cry of man's anguish went up unto God
"Lord, take away pain from the world thou hast made

* * * * *

That it love Thee the more."

Then answered the Lord to the cry of His world:

"Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain;

Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart,
And sacrifice high?

"Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?

Shall I take away Love that redeems with a price,
And smiles at its loss?

Can you spare from your lives that would climb into mine
The Christ on His Cross?"

It is the low condition, the ignorance, suffering and degradation in which so many human beings have for so long been left, and in which their very religion, in which they seemed to be groping after God, has often kept them, with no light from

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without shining upon them ; the bloodshed and cruelty that have marked man's path throughout his history ; the oppression that has been exercised by man on his fellows ; the dreadful crimes that have been neither averted nor visibly avenged ; in short, the actual condition of the human world amid what seems the awful silence of a God said to be everywhere present, righteous, all powerful, that creates the greatest difficulty for many minds.

But let us note well the fact that we do feel this difficulty, that we have become conscious that there is something higher and better, something diviner than what is manifested in nature and human history. This is a very important matter, for, as we shall yet see more fully, it is the revelation of God within ourselves, the evidence of a higher Life moving in us, of the reality of which we do not need argument to convince us. Those higher feelings, that sense of the supremacy of Righteousness and Love, have been wrought into us by the Power that forms us men in the very same way as all our intellectual experience and qualities have come to us by our relation to the world around us, under the influence of the Divine Spirit of our Life. It is a great truth that Eucken emphasises that the deepest ground of faith in God is the actual movement of a Spiritual Life within us, which is at the same time transcendent of us. The fundamental truth by which Religion stands or falls "is," he says,

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“ just this, that the Divine, without any obscuration of its nature, is present as a living force within the confines of our temporal, human existence, and there resists our acquiescence with the world as we find it.” It is here and now that we find God, and, by the feelings and aspirations He causes to arise within us, we may know in some measure what He is.

If we go on to consider the teaching of St. John (or whoever wrote the Books ascribed to him) concerning the true God, we shall find ourselves confirmed in this conception. As with St. Paul, He is the God of Righteousness, “ in whom there is no darkness at all,” and the God of Love as His essential being. “ He that loveth, knoweth God ; he that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God *is* love.” At the same time, his leading thought is that of *Life* ; the true God and the true life are inseparable : “ This is the true God and eternal life.” He wrote his Gospel, he says, “ that believing ye may have life through His name ” ; and his Epistle, “ that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.” “ The Life was manifested,” he says, “ the eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” “ I came that they may have life,” said Christ. “ I am the bread of life.” And that life was to be found through incorporation with Himself—through receiving within our own souls the Divine Life that was in Him. It was

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thus the very *Life* of God that was revealed in Jesus Christ as His Son. God was *in* Him as the Spirit of His life. That life of Christ was the manifestation of the Life of God in human form, so that Jesus could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is this fact, however explained, that is the basis of Christianity, and if we grasp it—the fact simply—we shall see what the true God is as He was revealed in that life of Christ, and shall, at the same time, find the answer to most of our difficulties.

God must be, deepest of all, an *ethical* Being, and, while nature cannot reveal such a Being, in man a moral nature has been evolved, through which the ethical character of the Power that forms him man can in some measure be shown. All the highest Divine Revelation must come through man, through the nature that has been formed in him and his response to that Higher than himself which, as the Spirit of his moral and spiritual life, moves within him. But as man has only very gradually risen into ethical being, and has only seen "as in a mirror dimly" the Divine truth, the revelation through man has been, of necessity, a very slow and gradual one. Man is also a free being and has not by any means always been true to his ethical nature, or to his perceptions of the true and right. With his highest perceptions much of an earthly nature has mingled. Thus it is only glimpses of the true God that we witness in human history as a whole.

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But almost everywhere there have been men who have had a clearer perception than their fellows of moral and spiritual truth, and have spoken to them in the name of a Supreme ethical Authority. In Israel, in particular, at least in certain outstanding members of the race, the ethical element was always rising higher in quality and expression, and along with this a truer conception of God was being gained, till it culminated in Jesus Christ, in whom "the Word became flesh." If we think of God as the Power that has formed the world and that is still working in man; if we think of Him as the immanent Spirit of man's life, we shall see that in a human life wholly devoted to God, wholly obedient to the Divine Spirit within, and to the Divine Will, as it is made known, the most complete revelation of the ethical and true God can be given that is possible to be given in this world. We may hold this or that theory as to *how* that Life of God comes to be able so fully to express itself in that Person, of how there comes to be in the world a human personality capable of giving such complete expression to the Divine, but it is simply on the *fact* that we now fix our attention. In Jesus Christ we see a life from the very first wholly surrendered to God as His Holy Spirit moved within Him, and as, through prayer and Providence, the will of God was indicated to Him. We see a Righteousness that never swerved from what was just, and a Love to which no limits

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can be placed, since, in its union with Righteousness, in obedience to the will of God, it gave itself wholly up in sacrifice. This was the highest Revelation of God that can be given in this human world ; here the gradually ascending revelation in man reaches its consummation. Where, may we not well ask, amidst the sin and sorrow and tragedy of the world, do we see the God of Love revealed if not in Christ and His Cross ?

1. It was the revelation of God as *immanent* in man, as the Spirit of our true life within us. And here we find an answer in part to the question, why, if God be righteous and good and almighty, the world goes on as it does, why He does not teach men better, why He does not interfere to help or to redress. The answer is that it is the Divine in the human, the Divine within you, that creates this very feeling for righteousness, this sympathy with the wronged and suffering, and that moves you to ask these questions. It is the inspiration of the Spirit of God within yourself, His way of teaching you what He is and where to find Him, His call to you to be His instrument of doing what you feel ought to be done, His movement in you towards the continuation and perfecting of your own life and of His Creation. The revelation of the true God in Christ teaches us that man is God's organ, God's son to learn and to give expression to the Will of his Father. The reason why the world is not better than it is, and why individual lives often

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remain on such a low level, is because men have been looking too exclusively to a God outside themselves, slow to learn where the living God is, or, having learned, reluctant to do His will, because, perhaps, it called for sacrifice. The power of the revelation of God in Christ is in the fact that Jesus stopped not short of the complete sacrifice of Himself in order to do the Will of God. So entirely was He one with God, so completely was He the Continuator of the Divine working in the world.

Moreover, since it was the very life of God that moved in Christ—God as the living God—we see God Himself in Christ accepting and submitting to the actual order of the Universe, and in that Divine silence which makes human life often seem so dark and tragical, enduring the worst that man can do to man, suffering the result in this life of the sin of humanity. In this light we see that the actual order is an absolutely necessary one—necessary for the making of man and for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes concerning him, therefore, one to be accepted, not only in submission, but in faith and hope.

2. But the revelation in Christ shows us that the true God is also *transcendent*—everywhere present. He was not merely within Jesus by His Spirit, He was at the same time the Father to whom Jesus prayed, and whose Will He ever sought to do. Immanence is not Identity. Man is not himself God, nor the only temple of

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His presence. Otherwise there would be no God *above* us to worship, and whose will it is ours to do. As Eckhardt (who has often been accused of the Pantheism which he here opposes) says : “ The fundamental thought is the real distinction between God and the world, together with their real inseparability ; for only really distinct elements can interpenetrate each other.” As with the growing plant, its life-principle is at once *in* it as the vital energy (spirit of life) which it obeys in its development, and *above* it as the Ideal to be realised in its perfection, so is it with man in relation to God. As Jesus taught, the ideal of our life is nothing short of God Himself in the form of sonship towards Him and likeness to Him. It is only when this ideal is reached that man is “ one with God,” and that in man the immanent Divine is one with the transcendent. It was this that was realised in Christ and manifested in the culmination of His life in the sacrifice of the Cross.

But, it may be asked, does not this transcendence of God revive our difficulty ? If God be above us all and everywhere present, why does He not do the things we should naturally expect Him to do ? The answer is that God is *Spirit*, and can only express Himself and act in or on the world through some material embodiment. His Spirit can influence our spirits, and through us He can act. Here is our responsibility. We ourselves are spiritual beings, but we could do nothing

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save by means of our bodily organs : the Father of our spirits needs also embodiment in order to act.

This is, in one aspect, the very meaning and explanation of *the Creation*. As pure Spirit, God would be for ever invisible and unknown. If He were to remain such there would be no life beyond Himself. But as Reason and Love He seeks expression. As the all-perfect Life of Love, He desires to impart that life to others who shall be His children. This involves the sacrifice in which the world is founded, and which makes self-sacrifice for the sake of others shine as the Divinest thing in man's experience. To find expression, God must go out from Himself, take form, so materialise Himself that He becomes, as it were, the seed which, in virtue of its Divine potency, shall ripen into worlds in which beings shall arise capable of receiving and expressing His own infinitely rich ethical and eternal life. This is why everywhere and in every aspect of life there is evolution, gradual development from a principle within. In our world this development has reached a stage at which man has become susceptible of spiritual influences which come to him in various forms—from the Divine manifestations, from increasing knowledge of the Truth, from the growth of moral ideals, from spiritual aspirations and their satisfaction, from the uprising of the Divine Spirit within us. God is in man, by means of these spiritual influences,

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continuing His work, imparting His Life, and seeking to realise His purpose of Love in His Creation. While He is constantly going forth from Himself, He never loses Himself in His Creation. If He did so, creation would cease. It is an eternal act in which God is for ever giving Himself and for ever finding Himself. This is the very life of God, the life of Perfect Love. While He becomes immanent in the world, He at the same time contains the world in Himself. Just as each world and each object in each world develops, not merely in virtue of its immanent life-principle, but also under the influence of its environment, so God is the Omnipresent spiritual environment of our being. “ *In Him* we live and move and have our being ” as truly as we do in the air and in the all-pervading, invisible ether.

But it is *as Spirit* that He is thus with us, and this is why He seems to be silent and inactive when we think He should speak and act. His transcendent presence has no relation to Space or Matter. He is *in* the world as the immanent Power of its life, which shows itself in man as that Spirit of Love and of all Truth and Goodness that seeks to inspire our souls, to form them in harmony with itself, to use us as the instruments of its service. It is *spiritual* influence, not compulsive, and, therefore, so soft and gentle that we are apt to be as oblivious of it as we are of the movements of the vital energy of our physical bodies, which is yet so real and so implicitly, although uncon-

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sciously, obeyed. It is indeed, the same energy in a higher form. Therefore, while it is true that

The outward God he knoweth not,
Who knows not God within,

and that much of our ignorance of God is owing to the fact that we look for His manifestations outside ourselves instead of watching for the movement of His Spirit in our hearts, it is also true that God is an all-encompassing spiritual Presence, "not far from each one of us." He is the Infinite, Omnipresent Reason and Love, the Source of our being and its end, in whom we can confidently trust, to whom we can pray as Jesus prayed, by whom we may be guided as Jesus was guided, to whom we can commit ourselves in life and in death and beyond it. He is "the Creator of the world who fainteth not, neither is weary, and there is no searching of His understanding; who giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength." He is the true God and the God of truth.

As the Source of our being—not merely in a far-off past, but its present and constant Source—God is, as Jesus taught, our *Father*. As such we should regard Him, trust, love and live before Him and unto Him. If we set ourselves earnestly so to live, making the spiritual life our primary concern, we shall find in our experience how real is that Fatherhood. If, said Jesus, we pray to "our Father who is in secret," we shall not pray in vain. We appeal to One who will not mock His children

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with a stone for bread. “ They who trust in Him shall never be confounded.”

What we need so much for our life is to believe in and realise this *presence of God*, both as a Holy Spirit within us and as the Infinite Spirit “ around us ever.” His presence within makes itself felt in that something that would always lift us higher and lead us to follow and act out that *Best* which has ever the supreme claim upon us. His presence without is revealed in the Providence that orders our life, in that higher Will which we cannot alter nor resist, in trustful acceptance of which in *everything* we alone can have peace ; and in that Greater, Wiser and Better than ourselves whom the heart craves for, and whom it finds in prayer, on whom we can cast our burdens and be sustained, to whom our labouring souls can come and find rest, to whom we can commit our way, ourselves, and all persons and interests we are concerned for, and find “ the peace of God which passeth all understanding guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” What Christ is “ made unto us of God,” how we have God in Christ we shall see in the next chapter. “ Little children,” writes the apostle, “ keep yourselves from idols. This is the true God and eternal Life.” We cannot *see* God, but

High above the limits of my seeing,
And folded far within the inmost heart,
And deep below the deeps of conscious being,
Thy splendour shineth ; there, O God, Thou art.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRUE CHRIST

“What think ye of Christ?”

“When the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son.”

It may seem very presumptuous on my part, at a time when there is so much discussion and unsettlement, to profess to set forth “the true Christ.” But it is only by each one who has thought long and seriously on the subject stating the truth as it appears to him, that the ultimate truth can be reached and stated in such a way as shall be vital for this generation. In this time of transition we must be patient with each other, assured that “we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth,” and that nothing but the truth is worth having; remembering also that the same truth may be stated in more than one form.

MANY CHRISTS

We have, in fact, not one Christ, but *many* Christs before us at present, and the question is forced on us, *What is the plain man to do?* If he asks, “Why not take the Christ of the New Testament?” he is told that there are *various*

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conceptions of Christ even there. If he says, "Well, then, why not go to the Gospels?" he is informed that the Gospels are comparatively late products of Christian belief, and that even in the earliest of them there are elements which cannot be deemed historical. If he asks, how is he to distinguish the historical from the non-historical, he is answered that this is a matter for *criticism*; he hears about the various "Sources" and "Sources of the Sources," about A and B, Q, the *Logia*, the credibility of Papias, etc., etc., matters which (although necessary for the critic) he knows nothing about, and into the nature and value of which he has neither the time nor the ability to inquire. A pretty fix he seems to be in. "This criticism may be all right and necessary" he is apt to say, "but it looks very much like taking the Bible away again from the people, and leaving us at the mercy of a new Priesthood of Criticism." If he asks the critics "What am I to think of Christ?" one scholarly critic tells him one thing, another something quite different. Some say "we know very little for certain about Christ," and, to crown all, others come to him, saying, "Don't trouble yourself too much, dear brother, there never was any Jesus Christ at all." *What is he to do?* If he is a *sensible* man, he will begin to *think*, and to ask himself some questions? "Why should I be interested in Jesus Christ at all?" Well, He is generally regarded as the Founder of the Christian religion. The great

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body of Christian people, both inside and outside the Churches, worship Him as God ; and trust in Him for salvation. Millions belonging to all ages and climes have believed that through Him they had found salvation. And they did find in Christ a power that made them new creatures, that lifted them out of self-love into the wider love of God and man, that gave them a new ideal, a new inspiration, and led them to a new and higher life. They believed that God drew nigh to them in Christ in reconciling love, and that their sins had been forgiven. They found deep within their hearts a peace with God with which their consciences were at one ; a love to God—something of the love that God is—became the spring of a new life in them ; they saw the true life of man calling them in Christ, and, yielding themselves to that call, they found that Christ Himself was ever with them, that He was within them, a guiding, inspiring and sustaining presence, to whom they lived and to whom they died—one for whom they were willing to suffer the loss of all things and to meet torture and death in their cruellest forms.

Then he thinks of the general *fruits* that have followed from this faith in Christ, of the difference between Christian and non-Christian civilisations, of the social spirit and social advances that have followed wherever Christ has been preached ; he remembers, perhaps (what many seem to forget), that all that is best in our own national life is due

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to the Christian missionaries who preached Christ to our ignorant, half savage ancestors. Thoughts like these crowd in upon him, and he says, " Surely he to whom all this was owing, or from whom it started, cannot have been any ordinary Person ; there must have been at least an exceptional power of God in him ; all those who believed in him and found such experiences through him cannot have been wholly deluded ; they were not all fools or ignorant people. What I witness as the effects of Christianity is very much like what I see when the spring sun begins to shine on the cold ice-bound earth and the Divine, beneficent forces of nature are set a-working, so that, under warm skies, from the bleak ground, life begins to sprout, and leaf, bud, flower and fruit gradually to appear. It looks very much like as if this Christ were a sun in the spiritual heavens, through the shining of which, on the hearts of men, those higher Divine forces which make for true life and manhood have been made active, so that if I see God in nature, I must see God also there—more manifestly *there*."

In some such way I think a sensible man would reason, and the more seriously he thinks, the more strongly will he be convinced, that, say of Christ what you may, there was certainly some real and exceptional power of God of the highest and most beneficent kind centred in Him—what the Christian apostles called " the power of God unto salvation."

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And then it flashes upon him that he has not been thinking of books, but of patent facts of the world's history, that he is not dependent on *Books* for the certainty of these things. This Christ was believed in and many of those effects realised before any Gospels or Epistles were written; it was just these experiences that led to the writings contained in the New Testament. They are real, whatever may be said of the representation of Christ in the Christian documents. "My faith in Christ, therefore," he will say, "is not dependent on the answer to those historical questions which the critics are discussing; they may be very interesting and important; but I have the great body of Christians of all time witnessing to the power of God in Christ. In all that is essential that witness is harmonious—in perfect agreement. Men and women everywhere testify that they have been saved from sin and made partakers in a new and higher life through Jesus Christ; they affirm with one voice that Christ is present with them now, and I am no more at liberty to set aside all that testimony than I should be to doubt the reality of physical cures in like manner attested. It is at least sufficient to induce me to put the power of God in Christ to the test in my own experience." If he does so, he will find how real it is; he will have "the witness in himself."

This is quite a sufficient "working faith"—to see in Christ *one in whom the power of God to*

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the spiritual salvation of the world is centred. Whether this or that theological definition of His Person, or explanation of His appearance in the world be correct or not, is not the primary question. That can come after. The great thing is to see in Christ the power of God unto man's salvation. The true Christ, most assuredly, does not come to us with an intellectual creed which He asks us to receive, but with a *moral claim*. He gives expression to that which we feel to be the true life of God in man, and as a Personality claims us for Himself. The first thing He asks is response to that claim. Theories about His Person and teaching are subordinate to this. And that life does not shine upon us merely from the Gospel pages. It has entered the world, never again to leave it. It shines upon us like the sun in the heavens; its nature we know perfectly well. As the truth of man, witnessed to in our own deepest consciousness, it claims us, and if we answer to that claim, we shall be on the way to know more about the true Christ, independently of the critics.

SOME CHRISTS OF TO-DAY

I have said that we have many Christs to-day. Let us glance at some of them that can be classified, and at the objections that are raised to the Christ of the Gospels.

1. We have, of course, in the first place, the Christ of ordinary evangelical theology—a Christ

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at once human and divine. In His deepest being He is "the Eternal Son of God," who at a definite time, and in a particular place, became incarnate—entered the world from above. We shall see immediately the truth there is in this statement, and how far it needs modification.

2. Over against this, we have a purely *humanitarian* Christ, stated in many forms, in which His Personality is regarded as distinctively human, instead of Divine. This is, of course, a *one-sided* view to take of Christ, or, indeed, of *anything* in a world wherein God is immanent.

3. There is the Christ of what is described as "Liberal Christianity," as represented, *e.g.*, by Harnack in his captivating book, *What is Christianity?* In this the stress is laid on the *Gospel of Christ*, rather than on His person—the Gospel of the Divine Fatherhood, and on Christ's teaching concerning the Kingdom, etc. Harnack is right, I think, in maintaining that *Christology*, around which so many fierce battles have been waged and even blood shed, ought not to have the *primary* position, but that this belongs to *the Gospel of God* in Christ, with its call and claim. As Christianity has often been presented and received, Christ is made almost everything, and the God and Father whom He proclaimed comes to occupy a secondary place in men's thoughts and regard. Christ, on the contrary, reveals *God*, comes to bring us to *God*; we must see *God* in Him. But it was not in words merely that Jesus declared

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the Father. His Gospel of God comes to us above all in His personality. It was in His *Spirit* and *Life* that He revealed the Father, and this raises that question of the relation of His *Person* to God, and to ourselves, which Harnack leaves indefinite, and which Ritschlians dispose of by saying that He has for us "the value of God." Neither position can be finally satisfactory.

4. In direct opposition to Harnack and to Protestant Liberal Theology, we have the Christ of some *Modernists* and others. Harnack drew His conception of Christ from the Synoptic Gospels, but Loisy wrote his first book to show that it was impossible to derive such a Christ therefrom, so many elements had already entered from the Christian belief concerning Him. The Gospels really give us an *Apocalyptic* Christ; it is from the Church that we get our Divine Christ, and from the Church we must continue to receive Him, whether we can harmonise the doctrine with the oneness of God or not.

Tyrrell, who followed on similar lines, found in the Christ of the Gospels one who seems at first sight very different from the Christ in whom Christians have believed. He is an Apocalyptic Christ, who believed Himself to be the super-human Messiah, and preached the approaching end of the age and the establishment on earth of a Kingdom of God in which morality should be, not so much perfected as ended, because it should be a higher state altogether. The high moral

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teaching found in association with this Eschatology is only incidental, not fundamental and distinctive, as Liberal Theologians and Christians in general believe. Christ was not that moral Teacher and Social Reformer which Harnack and others deem Him. The *Kingdom*, of course, never came, but its *idea* has been, or is being realised in the Roman Catholic Church. Here the Person of Christ *seems* to be sacrificed in the interests of a doctrine of the Church. Tyrrell, however, before he has done, brings out the spiritual significance of the Apocalyptic conceptions in a very interesting and suggestive way, and reaches the conception of Christ as one in a unique and complete manner *possessed* by the Spirit of God.

The Apocalyptic view has also, of course, been maintained by some German scholars, especially Johannes Weiss of Marburg and Albert Schweitzer of Strassburg, whose instructive work *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* has recently been published in an English translation. The view has also impressed some English scholars. More will yet be said concerning it.

5. Then there is a Christ about whom it is said that we can know little or nothing, if, indeed, He ever existed, which some deny. In this connection the latest theory is a modified revival of that of Albert Kalthoff of Bremen (one of whose books, published in 1904, has been translated and published in England under the title, *The Rise*

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of Christianity). According to Kalthoff Christianity was not originated by any real Christ of history, but arose "by spontaneous combustion, when the inflammable material, religious and social, which had collected together in the Roman Empire, came in contact with the Jewish Messianic expectations. Jesus of Nazareth never existed; and even supposing He had been one of the numerous Jewish Messiahs who were put to death [as Kalthoff supposes] by crucifixion, He certainly did not found Christianity" (Schweitzer). It sprang into being as a *Christ cult* among several other cults of the time. The same theory, though modified in several respects, has recently been set forth by Dr. K. C. Anderson in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1910. Dr. Anderson, however, says that it would be "the height of folly" for anyone to assert that Jesus never existed. But we know very little for certain about Him. Christianity was the result of ideal conceptions that had been for long forming in men's minds. "The Christ" is an ideal conception. Its lasting significance is that of "the dying and rising God"—something to be experienced in the individual life. There is, however, no real evidence adduced of the rise of Christianity in any such way. The theory owes its origin, its propounder has explained, to the fact that since it has been shown, as he thinks, by Loisy and others that the Christ of "Liberal Christianity" cannot be found in the Gospels, and as the Christ of orthodox Christianity cannot be accepted,

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some other way must be found of explaining the rise of Christianity.

It is impossible here to discuss these theories with fulness ; but if we notice, in the first place, certain aspects of this latest theory; it will enable us at the same time to deal with some current objections to the Christ of the Gospel narratives.

THE CULT THEORY, ETC.

The relation of *Paul* to Christ and Christianity is in itself a sufficient refutation of this cult theory. Did that once rigid Pharisee, so zealous for the faith of his fathers that he hunted and harried the Christians as the enemies of the Divinely-given Faith of Israel, not know what Christianity rested on when he embraced it and became its self-sacrificing apostle? Does he not make the grounds of his adherence to a Christ who had lived and died and risen again only a few years previously, and was now spiritually present as the inspiring power of his life, perfectly plain? It is nothing short of absurd to make Paul become a member and apostle of an obscure cult of the kind suggested.*

Kant's doctrine that the lasting significance and value of Christianity are in the *Ideal* which it holds forth, is maintained. But this ideal, it is said, we find in some form in other religions, thousands of years before Jesus was heard of.

* Of Kalthoff's theory Schweitzer remarks that "instead of leading to the right explanation, it only introduced a wearisome and unproductive controversy" (*Op. cit.* p. 318).

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It is well that we should see that we have now the ideal, whatever may be said of its historical basis, especially at a time when there are so many conflicting opinions respecting the historical Christ. We have, however, as we shall see, much more than the ideal. But does it never occur to those critics that if the ideal be as true and good as they say it is, springing up from the deepest and divinest depths of our humanity, it is far from improbable that it actually found its realisation and manifestation in the Christ of history as Christians believe it did, and that the old explanation of Christianity may, after all, be not only the simplest, but also the truest one. It was, we are told, this high moral ideal which gave Christianity its superiority and permanence amongst the various systems that have passed away; but we are left to wonder whence this high moral ideal came with such power into this particular religion at this particular time, if not from the Christ of history. An ideal is an excellent thing, but a mere ideal will never do for men what so many found faith in Christ to do for them. It was the fact that the ideal had been *actually realised* in one who was truly man, not only as an individual, but as representing us all, so that we are called to make it ours in the name of a Gospel that proclaims the Divine forgiveness and offers Divine help, even that of Christ Himself within us, for its realisation, that gave its power to Christianity. It was this that made it that

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Gospel of salvation which men needed, so that it proved itself a centre of Divine Life for the renewal of a world. Apart from that saving power of God in Christ, the ideal remains something very bright, no doubt, but all in the upper air, wound "too high, for mortal man beneath the sky," loaded as he is; altogether out of the reach of the "sinners" who seem to be regarded by the new illumination very much as they were by the Pharisees of our Lord's time, as not worth giving a thought to. What will this grand ideal of "the dying and rising God" do for *them*; and are they not as dear to God as others are? But what practical effect will it have on anyone? This ideal did not do much for men in the past. It is not even wholly clear what it is, as conceived by these critics.

We are told that the noble utterances ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels find no place in the teaching of the first Christian preachers and missionaries. That is another assertion which is impossible of proof. They are certainly all summed up in the "Christ" whom Paul preached, and whom he pleaded with men to "put on." How could they "put on" a Christ about whom they knew little or nothing? And if they were not derived from what the first preachers told concerning the Christ whom they asked men to receive, from whence did they find their way into the written Gospels? Of course, other ways may be suggested—it is easy to do that—but it may be only imagination

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in the service of a preconceived theory. No account of the origin of Christianity has yet been given so credible as the old belief founded on the substantial accuracy of the synoptic Gospels ; and rational criticism of the New Testament affords no grounds for treating the Gospel narratives as if they were altogether or almost wholly untrustworthy in their account of Jesus Christ.

The underlying assumption here seems to be that Christianity cannot have sprung from *the single Personality of Jesus*. That is, those critics think so, and, therefore, they put forth those theories to explain its rise in some other way. But they only show that they have failed to understand the Divine method in human history. No one imagines that it all sprang ready-made from one human Personality like Pallas from the head of Zeus. Did not Paul say that Jesus had appeared "in the fulness of the time" to which God had been leading up through a long continued movement in many persons? This will come before us again ; but we need not wonder that there has only been *one* Christ. There has been only one Buddha, one Confucius, one Mahomet, even only one Plato and one Shakespeare. It is the Divine method that the results of long processes of Divine working in man should come to the full birth in great personalities. Everything goes to show that the appearance of Christ was the consummation of a Divine world-movement. As Renan has said (in words which have been

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strangely quoted in support of the theory criticised), “ It is undeniable that circumstances told for much in the success of this wonderful revolution. Each stage in the development of humanity is a privileged epoch, in which it reaches perfection without effort by a sort of spontaneous instinct. The Jewish state offered the most remarkable intellectual and moral conditions that the human race has ever presented. It was one of those Divine moments when a thousand hidden forces conspire to produce grand results.” The reason was that, deepest of all, *God* was working, and the “ grand results ” were summed up, expressed and sent forth in their power in the personality of Jesus Christ. It was really from *God* they came. Christianity is God’s work, not man’s. “ Ye are God’s building,” writes Paul ; Jesus Christ is “ the chief corner-stone.”

The Gospel history of Christ is rejected because in even its earliest accounts it is said to be saturated with “ the supernatural ” ; not only in its presentation of the Person of Christ, but also in its reports of His teaching ; it is found even in the “ Sermon on the Mount.” The conclusion is come to that, since “ the supernatural ” cannot be accepted, there are mythical or idealising elements which so run throughout the Gospel history that we can form no reliable opinion concerning Christ. But what is meant by “ the supernatural ? ” There is no term more needing definition. In itself the word simply

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means "above Nature"; but it is used in a great variety of ways. (1) It is employed to describe ghost stories, spirit appearances and certain things which we cannot as yet explain. (2) It means sometimes simply the creative Divine. (3) It is often used as equivalent to "the miraculous" in the sense of direct Divine intervention in the natural order, or entrance into it, the reality of which, of course, must not be merely assumed but proved. (4) It is also used for "the miraculous" as manifested by man endowed with special Divine power. The true "supernatural" is equivalent to the *Spiritual* and Divine, as distinguished from the purely natural. The supernatural, *in this sense*, must be accepted as real by all who believe that there is a God above nature who as Spirit has a vital relation to man (who himself is, in his freedom, as spirit, above nature); yet, in the natural sphere, always working through nature and man. Religion cannot exist apart from the belief that there is a Divine Spirit influencing the human—acting, no doubt, in a perfectly orderly manner; in other words, that there is a spiritual order higher than the natural, which may through human personalities make itself manifest in the natural order. Those amongst whom Jesus appeared, and Jesus Himself, regarded as man, believed in the supernatural in this sense. The "supernatural" associated with Jesus in the Gospels is simply what was believed to belong to him as *the Christ*,

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the Messiah of God. The wonders attributed to Him are not "myths," but are ascribed to the action of the Spirit of God in Him. His Person is only "supernatural" in the sense that He was the Son of God as the Messiah, born of the Spirit. The virgin birth, whether historical or not, is not a myth, but a religious way of accounting for His remarkable Personality, and for that unique Sonship which belonged to Him as the Christ. The Gospels make it quite evident that whatever supernatural elements surround His Person attached themselves to Him as the Messiah of God, possessed of special endowments for His Office, and filled with the Spirit. It is only in this sense that there is a "Christological" element in the Gospels. Whether *everything* ascribed to Jesus therein is historical or not may be questioned. But from the impression He made and the faith He was enabled to kindle, which endured, or revived, in spite of His crucifixion, there is every reason to believe that He did possess exceptional endowments, and such a power of the Spirit as enabled Him to perform, at the very least, such remarkable works of healing as are not wholly without analogies in later times; and possibly, other wonderful works according to laws not as yet discerned by us. If in any real sense God was incarnate in Him, His personality, while truly human, must have been raised in its powers above other personalities possessed in less measure by God. The most natural explanation of the rise

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of Christianity is that it had its origin in the remarkable Personality of Jesus Christ, in whom men came to see the presence of the Divine. We need no other theory of its origin than this.

“ JESUS OR CHRIST ? ”

The question of *Christ* has also been much discussed under the form of “ Jesus or Christ ? ” — “ Jesus ” standing for the historical person, and “ Christ ” for the same Person “ idealised,” and the results show the great diversity of opinion which is come to on the subject when once the solid ground has been abandoned. The New Testament gives no countenance to any such alternative. What it brings before us is, in the words of St. Matthew’s Gospel, “ Jesus *the* Christ.” Apart from “ Jesus ” we cannot have “ Christ ” in the New Testament sense of the word, and apart from “ the Christ ” Jesus remains without the designation which He naturally received in the circumstances amid which He appeared; and which truly described Him for those who first believed on Him. There is no need to look beyond expectations founded on the Old Testament to understand why Jesus was regarded as “ the Christ.” The term (which we find in the Old Testament) means simply the Anointed, or the Messiah-King, He who was to come bringing in “ the Kingdom of God.” The great question when Jesus appeared, and for long after, was whether He was “ the Christ.” Accepted as such

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by His disciples, the term was, in the course of time, joined to "Jesus," becoming thus part of the proper name by which He was distinguished from others bearing the name of Jesus. Whatever analogies to Jewish beliefs may be found elsewhere, they have no direct bearing on the name "Jesus Christ." They can, at the most, only show a general tendency to entertain similar beliefs, which fact does not in any way detract from those created in the minds of the Jewish people by the teaching of their prophets.

THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS

What kind of Christ was Jesus? Was He the Apocalyptic or Eschatological Messiah of some critics; or was He the great moral and spiritual Teacher of others? The answer, I think, must be that He was *both* and *more*. It is perhaps impossible to get with absolute certainty to the real thought of Jesus concerning "the Kingdom." The records may be coloured by the beliefs entertained among His early disciples of the speedy return of their Lord, and critical dissection of the sources does not afford much sure aid. It is certain that when the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were put together in their present form, expectations of *national* deliverance, through a Christ who should return, were still entertained, and we are told that the representation in "Q" the source of much in Matthew and Luke, is of a Jewish-Christian character. (See "Recent

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Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels," by Rev. Principal Allen, M.A., in *Expository Times* for July, 1909.) But we must be prepared to take it as represented in the Gospels. He was certainly not the Apocalyptic Messiah of the popular expectation, and the picture of Him painted by Tyrrell is greatly exaggerated on the one side. But I think it must be said that, taking the Gospels as we find them, and reading them carefully, free from bias and preconceptions, solely anxious for the truth—beginning with S. Mark's as the earliest—the conviction is forced on one that Jesus is at least represented as having come proclaiming the near approach of the Kingdom or Reign of God, as something that should come from Heaven and be established on the earth (or, rather, in the land), at the consummation of the age then running for the Jewish people.

The near approach of the Kingdom was what Jesus preached as His "good tidings" to the people, and veritable good tidings it would be to those who believed Him—the familiar rendering "the Gospel" suggests quite later ideas to our minds. It was like proclaiming the dawn of "the millennium." John the Baptist had already announced the nearness of God's Kingdom; but it was in its judgment aspect that he proclaimed it; Jesus emphasised its gracious aspect as the coming of salvation. We have no need to go to the later Apocalyptic conceptions for the foundation of this Gospel; we find it in the Old

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Testament. The prophets had foretold the coming of this Kingdom in "the latter days." Isaiah had pictured it as a time of release to the captive, of justice and consolation to the poor and oppressed, a Jubilee year of "Divine acceptance"; and Jesus declared that it had dawned upon them. "Daniel" had foretold how "the God of Heaven should set up a Kingdom" which should never be destroyed, and had seen in vision the government committed to one who "came with the clouds of heaven, like unto a son of man"; he had even given indications of the time when it should appear; Jesus announced that "the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand." He not only preached this Gospel Himself, but sent forth His disciples to proclaim it throughout the land, and we know for certain that they at least did not give it a spiritual interpretation. This Kingdom is always represented as being to be set up in Palestine, under "the Son of man," by which designation Jesus almost always spoke of Himself as its King and Head. The term, however, had with Him a deeper significance than it had in the popular apocalyptic writings. As we find it, for example, in connection with the saying "the Sabbath was made for *man*" it suggests that "the *man*"—the representative of the true humanity—is implied in it. The term in Daniel means simply *man*. In this Kingdom all that was evil and oppressive should be done away, sin and sorrow and death should be ended,

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and all good and blessedness found in perpetuity. It was specially a gospel for the poor and the persecuted for righteousness' sake. To seek this Kingdom which the just and loving Heavenly Father had provided for them should therefore be the supreme concern of men ; it was the same thing as "entering into *life*"—into "eternal life," the perfect life of the coming age. But all should not enter it ; only "the righteous," those who should be "accounted worthy." The righteous dead should be raised to share in it. To announce the coming of this Kingdom, to call men to repentance, to teach them the righteousness required for entrance into it, was the object of the preaching of Jesus. The coming of the Kingdom was also that of the Judgment at the consummation of the age under the Son of man as Judge. The nation, if it turned not to God, should then, with all the unrighteous, meet its doom. This was not the same thing, however, as "the end of the world" in our sense of the phrase, but the consummation of that age, and it was Israel that was primarily in view. The pictures of the Judgment in all the Gospels refer solely to that nation, except the last representation in Matt. xxv., where "the nations"—the surrounding peoples—are judged and dealt with according to their action toward those who were Christ's. It is distinctly said in all the Gospels that *all* the things represented as happening should come to pass *before that generation passed away*.

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But although the Kingdom was approaching, it was not *immediately* at hand. All Christ's teaching implies this; but there is nothing in it that requires the thought of *long* delay. More than once He gave a distinct negative to the expectation that the Kingdom "should immediately appear." He preached repentance and righteousness as its preparation, and He pointed to the powers He was endowed with, through the indwelling Spirit, as a proof of His commission, and, indeed, as an evidence that the Kingdom had "come upon them." Although in its form it might be outward, in its essence it was spiritual. While it was something to be entered in the future, men really entered it now as they accepted Jesus and His teaching—that is, they became members of it, having "their names written in Heaven," and would be recognised as such by the Son of Man when He came in His glory. He could thus say that the Kingdom of God was *within* men. But the people, as a whole, and the heads of the nation in particular, refused to listen to His call or to believe in His glad tidings. Jesus saw that He was to be rejected as His forerunner John had been, and believed that He must *die* before the Kingdom could come. After this "the Son of Man should appear in His glory" and come from God in the full power and majesty of the Kingdom. He was doubtless led to this belief also by the teaching of the prophets. Isaiah had pictured the suffering "Servant of God," through

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whose sacrifice of himself alone could the gracious “purpose of the Lord prosper in his hand.” And Daniel had spoken of an “anointed one”—a Messiah or Christ—who should be “cut off.” But Jesus was confident that by this very means the promised Kingdom would come; He should rise from the dead and come again “in the power and glory of His Father.” After His death, all should be fulfilled. It was the impenitence of the people that made His death necessary, but up till near the end, as we see from His prayer in Gethsemane, He hoped that in some way that cup would be taken away from Him. He certainly represented His coming again in an outward manner, but, of course, He who taught that God was everywhere present—with men in secret—did not think that it was necessary to die in order to get to God, or that He would come literally riding on the clouds. Although His return should not be immediate, yet it was *near*. His ambassadors should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man was come. Some who stood with Him should not taste of death till they had seen the Kingdom coming in power. It was a coming in judgment to the deliverance of God’s people who cried to Him day and night, and He wondered whether, “when the Son of Man came He would find faith on the earth.” In what is perhaps a later addition, it is said that the Gospel of the Kingdom must first be proclaimed to all nations. Of course, after the event, we can give a

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spiritual interpretation to many of these sayings, but it is doubtful whether we get thus at the true Jesus.*

We find also *the great moral and spiritual Teacher* in His instruction of the people and His disciples concerning the Kingdom, by way of preparing them for its coming and for participation in its life. His teaching was all given in this connection and cannot be rightly separated from it. Its nature will be more fully considered in another chapter.

The coming of "the Kingdom of God" was the great hope of the pious and zealous of the people, and from amongst these Jesus drew His disciples. But the chief of the nation looked for the Messiah to come (most probably from heaven) as a King and Conqueror bringing them deliverance from the Roman power. As Jesus had nothing to say in this respect, and as the Kingdom that He preached showed no sign of appearing, they rejected Him and got Him crucified as one who falsely and blasphemously professed to be the Messianic Son of God, and as such "the King of the Jews." His disciples, however, although disappointed and scattered for the moment, could not give up their faith in Him as the Messiah, and after they became convinced that He was risen from the dead, they rallied again and began

* Dr. von Dobschütz remarks: "We may truly say that it pleased God to fulfil Jesus' words thus, but we would be guilty of false witness if we dared to maintain that Jesus Himself expressed this as His own opinion" (*Expositor*, May, 1910).

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to preach Him as the Christ, and to announce His speedy return from God as King and Judge, offering in the meanwhile forgiveness and salvation in His name to all who would believe and prepare to welcome Him. How the Apocalyptic conception of His preaching affects the question of the *Person* of Christ and the Incarnation will be considered immediately ; meanwhile let us follow the course of the development of the faith in Jesus as “ the Christ.”

THE CHRIST OF THE SPIRIT: THE UNIVERSAL CHRIST

The Kingdom did not come in any outward way. But in the very fact that the outward expectation was disappointed Jesus became very much *more* than the Eschatological Messiah or the great moral Teacher. He became the Revelation of God in man, and the spiritual Lord and Saviour of men.

To regard Jesus as “ the Christ ” was no “ mere idealisation ” of Him. “ The Christ ” was simply the form prepared for Him, in which He might be received and which He Himself accepted. For long after His death many of His first disciples clung to much of the old Jewish expectation, believing that Jesus, whom God had raised from the dead, would come again from heaven in bodily form to set up God’s Kingdom in Israel. But when Hellenistic Jews, such as Stephen, came to believe that Jesus was the true Christ, they brought the breath of a wider spirit into Christ-

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ianity. And when Paul was converted, a man was found through whom the new faith should be freed from the bonds of Jewish Messianism entirely. Paul also, indeed, at least throughout the greater part of his life, looked for the re-appearing of Jesus on the earth ; but to him He was no mere Jewish Christ, or “ a Christ after the flesh,” but *the universal Christ of the Spirit*, in whose death God had been reconciling the world to Himself, so that men, in spite of their sinfulness, might be accepted as His sons, and receive the Spirit of sonship into their hearts. It was *the Spirit* that had gone forth from Jesus, the Spirit that had been expressed by Him in His life and above all in His death—the Spirit that He was—that mattered : “ If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” This was the very Spirit of God that had dwelt in Jesus and which, through Christ and His Cross, had come to dwell in them all. “ Wherefore,” he says, “ we henceforth know no man after the flesh ; even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more.” From Jesus crucified, that Holy *Spirit* proceeded in which God had promised through the prophets of Israel to come to men in His Grace to dwell in them for ever. It was in the line of the Old Testament prophecy and not of ethnic ideals that Christianity became an accepted faith. And it was this Spirit of Christ and of God that was the power of the new life in men, of their sonship toward God, of brotherly

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love amongst themselves, and so, of spiritual and eternal salvation. It was thus that Jesus—Jesus of Nazareth—really brought, not to that nation only, but to the whole world, spiritually and truly, the “ Grace ” and “ Salvation ” which “ the Christ ” was to bring. Although Paul did not at once perceive that in this spiritual coming of Christ he had His real second coming, he taught that the Kingdom of God was not carnal but spiritual,—“ righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit ” and that Christ was present in the Spirit ; “ the Spirit ” in them was Christ in them. Jesus was in this way to Paul the true Christ, and it is mainly in the same light that He has been accepted as such by those who have believed in Him unto salvation. Men found in Him the culmination of a progressive Divine Revelation, coming mainly in one distinct line and in Hebrew and Jewish forms of representation. The designation “ Jesus Christ ” really means nothing more than this. He was the long-promised “ anointed one ” of God. In Jesus was concentrated a fulness of Divine spiritual power which was liberated by His death on the Cross, and went forth to men as that spiritual energy which created Christianity.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

In this way men were led to a doctrine of the *Person* of Christ. It was as “ the Christ ” they were first enabled to receive Him ; but they were

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gradually led to something wider and higher. Here again, we have no mere "idealisation," but a gradual guidance by the Spirit of Truth into a true conception of the relation of Jesus Christ to God and man. Paul held that the Spirit of God could go forth as it did through Jesus because He, in His deepest self, had come from God, appearing in the fulness of the time as "God's own Son" in the flesh. He was true man of the seed of David after the flesh, but the Divine Son of God after the Holy Spirit. This was how Paul accounted for the Divine in Christ. He stated no theory as to *how* the Son of God entered the world, but to him He was "God's own Son," and the Lord and Saviour of men, "at the right hand of God" in His celestial life, but present with men in the Spirit.

In the Fourth Gospel we have the culmination of the line of thought followed by Paul, and the relation of Christ to God stated in the forms of the philosophical thought of the time. He was still "the Christ," through whom the Spirit of God, the Spirit and Power of the Divine and eternal Life in man, entered the world. He came forth from God; but He is now more definitely represented as having pre-existed from eternity with or in God as the *Logos* (Reason and Word), through whom, as Alexandrian philosophy taught, all things had been created. Becoming flesh, the Life, even the eternal Life of God, was manifested by Him in human form. But no more than in

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Paul is there any theory of *how* this Divine Being came into the world of men, or "became flesh." An earlier mode of accounting for Christ was by a miraculous birth, but, although neither Paul nor John could have been ignorant of this, neither of them refers to it, probably because of its inadequacy and Judaistic source. It may, however, be implied in Rom. i. 4.

What was thus reached was, I repeat, no mere "idealisation" of Jesus, but a serious formulation of that which men were coming to see gave His Person its value for them. This was not as a teacher, nor as the Messiah, but as He in whom they saw *God* and beheld the *very Life of God* revealed. That life *can* only be revealed in a human personality; and in the life and sacrifice of Christ they saw shining upon them what the heart had longed for and now recognised as the very life of God. As Paul wrote, "God that said Light shall shine out of darkness, shone in our hearts, to give the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

As this Divine and human Person, He has been regarded by the Christian Church as a whole. The conviction that in Christ we have both God and man in the unity of a Divine-human Person is essential to vital Christianity. It is only *this* Christ who has supreme value for us. We may exalt the human as highly as we please; we may even see in Jesus "the Ideal" realised; but if we do not at the same time see *God* incarnate in

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Him Christianity loses its power ; it ceases to be a religion. Where else, indeed, shall we behold God—the God of Love—if not in Christ and His Cross ? But there has been much dispute over a consistent doctrine of His Person, such as should account for a true humanity as well as for a real divinity, and to-day, the evangelical doctrine needs to be restated in harmony with the representation of Jesus in the Gospels and with modern thought, and so as not to be a difficulty driving men away from Christianity, but easily credible by them. We cannot *force* people now-a-days to accept a doctrine, and it will not do to say with Modernists that we must simply believe in the Deity of Christ on the authority of the Church. We must have valid grounds for our faith, and nothing that we do not see to be in harmony with reason can be a vital and really influential belief.

We are not bound down to the very same *forms* of statement as those of Paul and John. No doubt they were taught by the Spirit, but the *formulation* of doctrine is the work of the *Intellect*, giving expression to the truth in the forms of thought of the time. We need to have the same essential truth expressed in the forms of thought of our own time. This ought to be the chief aim and work of modern Theology ; not merely to insist on the acceptance of the old *forms* of doctrine, but to state the same essential truth in forms that will commend it to the men of the

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present. We have little need in these days to make it difficult for men to believe; a great responsibility rests on us if we do so. Of course, it must be the real Christ and the real saving Gospel in Him that we present. There must be no coming down from the truth in order to meet mere rationalising tendencies. We should betray our trust if we did so. But we must be very careful to see that it is indeed the necessary truth that we are contending for. Our endeavour should be to make belief in the incarnation of God in Christ and in the spiritual, saving Gospel that flows from His Person and Work, not only easily credible, but also attractive, something that fits into the rest of our knowledge and meets the deepest wants of the heart. Jesus never put a hard doctrine of incarnation between men and salvation, and we depart as far from Christ when we do so as if we demanded their entrance into some earthly Church before they could be saved. It is not the spirit of rationalism that urges this earnest plea, but the experience of salvation, in which all are meant to share, while many are kept from it by the setting before them of beliefs which they are unable to receive. When the older forms of statement have been discarded, the tendency is to jump to the conclusion that the same essential truth cannot be seen in the light of modern knowledge and stated in a credible form. If our theology is not brought into harmony with the modern mind, it is only a question of

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the time when, not only our churches, but Christianity itself, will be forsaken. Once more, the Kingdom of God will be taken away from those to whom it has been committed.

But some ask, "Why trouble with these doctrines at all? Why not be content with the great and true and beautiful *humanity* of Jesus, and strive to follow Him as our Leader in the true life?" Just because that is insufficient for religion, insufficient even for a theistic conception of manhood. We must relate all personalities to God, and Jesus stands in such a special relationship to the religious life that to fail to do so in His case is not only to leave Him without any satisfactory explanation, but to fail to discern the revelation that we have in Him. God, moreover, is with us in many ways, and we may find that in a special manner He is with us in Christ. It is only when the Person of Christ is brought into relation to God that He comes to possess the influence which is necessary to make Him an *effective* Leader of men. Experience shows that whenever we come to think of manhood only in Christ His saving power over men is lost—at least for the great majority.

But, indeed, a purely human Christ is possible only in a purely Godless world, where God has no vital relation to man's life. If God be the deepest Spirit of our life, He must be, in some measure, manifested in every human life that is true to His Spirit. He will be fully present and

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revealed in a human life wholly receptive of Him and entirely one with Him. This is what we actually *see* in Jesus Christ—the foundation of all our theories concerning Him. It is all but universally confessed that in Him we have the highest revelation of the Divine in its deepest ethical character. By common consent—assuming the Divine in man—Christ stands supreme, we may even say, alone, unapproachable. But, taking simply “the highest,” where does this lead us? What does it imply? Does it only give us a Christ who was Divine in the sense in which we can affirm Divinity of other men? But *of what other man* can we affirm Divinity in the full sense of the word? We must not separate Christ from the race, but what we see in others only in partial and fleeting gleams we behold in Him completely and from first to last. This makes all the difference. It gives us the unique Christ in whom we witness such a presence of God in the human, such an indwelling of God from the first, continuously and fully received by the personality, as makes the Person as truly Divine as He is human, as truly God as He is man, always, of course, in the form and under the limitations of humanity, apart from which we should lose the human Christ altogether. Was He *sinless* and *morally perfect*? If He was not, then, certainly, He was not Divine. But what is *sin*? At bottom it is self-love, selfishness? There was no selfishness in Jesus, but a spirit that was from first

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to last entirely at one with God and man. This is at the same time moral perfection. We do not need to wait till *all men* are perfected in order to behold it in the individual.

But *Is it possible for the Infinite God to become expressed in human form?* Is not the idea self-contradictory? Certainly it is if we think of the Infinite as physical or as quantitative. But if we think of it as spiritual and qualitative—of the *ethical* Infinite, which God *is*—of perfect Righteousness and Love, and believe that the human personality is in the image of the Divine, we can see that the essential life of God can be as fully expressed in a human as in any conceivable form.

To-day, however, many find themselves in difficulty, and to make belief in Christ easier, theories are advanced which are in danger of leaving out that which is essential. That Jesus was human is readily believed; but it is not so easy to believe that He was at the same time Divine in the sense in which Paul and John affirmed it, and as the Church has continued to state it. It should not be forgotten, however, that Jesus never claimed to be “God,” and that neither Paul nor John identified Jesus Christ with the supreme God. Even in the fourth Gospel Jesus speaks of “the only God” and says, “My Father is greater than I.” Neither Paul nor John departed from his Monotheism; “there is one *God*, the Father,” says Paul, “and one *Lord*,

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Jesus Christ"—and the Christian Church, notwithstanding its doctrine of a Trinity, has all along sought to stand fast by the unity of God. But it is difficult to hold *vitally*, along with this truth of the unity of God, belief in a second Person in the Godhead who existed in such a distinct Personality that He could at a definite time go forth from God into the world, be born as a little child, live in the world a dependent human being, die, be buried, and again return to God to be "highly exalted" by Him. To those Jews who believed in a Messiah, pre-existent in some form, and to the Greeks, familiar with narratives of the descent of Divine Beings to earth, the belief in Jesus as such a Divine Son of God would not be difficult; but it has a very real difficulty for many to-day, and we must endeavour to find a mode of statement which will effectually conserve the great Christian truth concerning the Person of Christ, and at the same time be credible to the men of the present.

We must avoid all that would suggest the mythological and we must preserve the unity of God. While we are careful to keep clear of a one-sided humanitarianism, such as loses the real significance of Christ, we must not fall into either Tritheism or Ditheism, nor must we interpret the pre-existent Divine Sonship in an Arian sense, as if there were a subordinate God. Nor must we make the humanity unreal. These errors were all repudiated by the Church. While

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there is a deep and essential truth in the doctrine of the Divine Eternal Sonship, we must endeavour so to conceive the relation of "the Son" to "the Father" as to be able to hold fast our faith in the one only God and yet see God incarnate in Jesus.

Closely connected with the question of the Person of Christ is that of *How a Divine Being could enter the world*, which, as we have seen, was untouched by Paul and John. The theory of a *miraculous birth* seems inadequate to give the presence in the world of a pre-existent Being, except on such a theosophic basis as needs itself to be established. As we find it in the Gospels, it does not profess to do so. It is the birth of an entirely *new* Being to be called "the Son of God" because of His conception through the Holy Spirit—a Jewish, earlier and lower doctrine than that of John or of Paul. Besides, to many the evidence of the historicity of these narratives is insufficient. Moreover, a Christ who only enters our world by a miracle does not seem truly human or to be one who meets the needs of our humanity.

THE PERSONALITY IN THE GOSPELS

But now let us ask whether *the Personality in the Gospels*—the Apocalyptic Christ which they represent in particular—warrants the assertion that He was Divine as well as human, or that God was incarnate in Him. It must be

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remembered, however, that it is not the Gospels alone that form the basis of these beliefs, but all that came after, all that proceeded from the life and work of Jesus. If we isolate Jesus from the effects that followed His death, we take only a partial and incomplete view of Him; we have only a Christ in the flesh, not the Christ of the Spirit. If we may use a physical illustration in such a connection, we might view in a similar way the grains of powder that form a charge and say there does not seem to be any very great power there. But let the hidden energy be *liberated* and it will rive the rocks asunder. So, Jesus felt Himself to be limited: "I have," He said, "a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." It was that baptism of death that liberated the Divine energy pent up within Him, and showed Him to be "the Son of God in power"—Him in whom was centred the spiritual energy of God unto the world's salvation.

What we see in the Gospels, therefore, is the Divine under the limitations of a human form, in which it dwells, and of the conditions of time and place. We cannot expect to behold Omnipotence or Omniscience, nor the infinite quantitatively regarded, only the qualitative Infinite of perfect Righteousness and Love. What we see is a human person so one with the Divine within that we can only think of Him as a Divine-human Person; but we can look for nothing from Him

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which is out of keeping with a genuine humanity. In Jesus, therefore, we do not see a Being who claims to be Himself *God*, or who suggests that He is such to those who behold Him. Nor does He claim or suggest that He has come from another world into this, nor regard Himself as a super-human or a supernatural Being. A supernatural Being would not be human, unless in the sense in which man is supernatural. What we need to see is a *truly human, yet also Divine Christ*, in whom God is incarnate for our highest life and salvation. In the Christ of the Gospels we behold One who is filled with the Spirit of God—*one* with God. He knows Himself to be “the Son”—in a special and unique sense—who alone truly knows the Father and can reveal Him to men. But He looks to and acknowledges that God and Father as the Source of all that is in Him: “All things have been delivered (or committed) to me of my Father.” He is “the Son” as Messiah, the chosen, anointed, and sent of God. He has an unbroken consciousness of Sonship towards God, and speaks of “My Father in heaven” as one standing in a special relationship to God. But He teaches His disciples also to say “Our Father,” and speaks constantly of “your Father” and “your Father in heaven.” “No one is good,” He says in plain words, “save God only.” What we must expect to see in Him, I repeat, is not a human being going about as a God on the earth, but one in whom God, by the indwelling of His

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Spirit—in His ethical Truth and Righteousness and Love—is incarnate, fully possessing the Personality.

If Jesus conceived and preached the coming of the Kingdom and His own return in forms which were not realised, this is no argument against the Divinity of His Person or the real incarnation of God in Him. On any theory of His Person there were limitations. His statement that He was ignorant of the day and the hour—as the Messianic Son (for it could not have been as a Divine Son that He was ignorant)—has always been accepted by those who have believed in His Deity. If He was also ignorant of the *form* in which the Kingdom should come we have in this simply another instance of necessary limitation. There were doubtless many things which Jesus did not know and to have known which, as particular facts of human knowledge, would have been unnatural if not impossible for a genuine man of His time and place. He had to learn like other children; we are told that He “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” His knowledge was held by Him in human form. It was His spirit, not His intellect that was the sphere of the Divine indwelling and illumination. In His humanity He was the subject of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit does not teach in words or give information as to the *forms* of events. In nothing spiritual and essential was He in error. In His Personality He stood

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high above all others, with such a clear and full consciousness of God as the Heavenly Father, and of His own Sonship towards Him, as no other man ever had. He was sure that God had in His eternal counsels provided a Kingdom of perfect and eternal life for His children, and that He was drawing nigh to them to their redemption in the inauguration of a reign of Righteousness in which their true and eternal good should be found. He felt Himself inspired and empowered to announce it, and to bring it in, and if He pictured it, even to Himself, as coming in an outward manner, as the pious of His day expected, and looked for it, and as He believed it to be promised in the Scriptures, there was nothing in this but such a human conception as was natural to a man of His time and place, who believed in the Scriptures as teaching the truth. But He did not accept the popular conception of the Kingdom or of "the Christ." He saw also that if the Kingdom was rejected by Israel there would be a change in the manner of its coming: the Lord of the vineyard would take it from the wicked husbandmen and give it to others more worthy; the Kingdom, He said plainly, should be "taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." The very fact that the Kingdom was something that could be thus "taken from them" and "given" to others shows that His conception of it was essentially *spiritual*, whatever may have been the *form* in which He represented its coming.

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The necessity for His death was also peculiar to Himself, entirely different from the popular expectation. Why was it necessary that He should submit to death before the Kingdom could come in power? Not merely because only thus could He become invested with His full Messianic dignity, but, as He said, because His life should thus be given as “a ransom for many”—a redemption-price which should buy them from the dominion of Satan, and make them the sons of God, the children of the Kingdom. It was a sacrifice which He had to make in order to save them from sin to God, the final expression of the Spirit that moved Him. In all this we see deep spiritual convictions in which He was not mistaken, and which had no place in the popular expectations. *The event proved their truth.* The Kingdom *did* begin to come in its true spiritual form and power after His death, and He Himself “came” to reign in men’s hearts as the Lord of the Kingdom, He was only then known in spirit and truth. The Judgment on the nation also fell—the Son of Man verily came “in the clouds of heaven” (the symbol of power), and the spiritual principles of the Kingdom began to judge all men. The Spirit of God was felt to go forth from Him, and He Himself to be one with it. If the realisation transcended the *forms* in which the events were conceived even by Himself it is only what we should expect to witness. It is in the spiritual element that possessed Him that we see God in

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Christ. We cannot better describe His Person than by saying (with Tyrrell) that He was *possessed* by the Spirit of God. And it is in such entire *possession* from first to last, in a nature capable of expressing the Divine, that we behold the true incarnation of God in Christ.

THE MODE OF THE INCARNATION

If we view the Incarnation in this way it will enable us also to understand how it was accomplished. It was the complete indwelling and possession of a human spirit by God in His ethical and spiritual truth—God thus finding as complete expression for Himself as it was possible to find in a human form, and thus constituting Jesus His unique (while truly human) and perfect Son. There was, therefore, as truly a completely Divine as there was a completely human side to the personality of Jesus. In order to see this we do not need to try to think of a Divine Being stepping out of His Divine Life at a definite moment of time, contracting Himself to the dimensions of a rudimentary human being, or in some way imparting so much, as it were, of Himself thereto. This is a form of belief which many profess to hold, and which they regard as the only “orthodox” belief, or the only theory that can give us the Divine Christ or an actual incarnation of God in Jesus. But it may be seriously questioned whether there are many to whom it is a real, vital truth. It is certain that many find it exceedingly

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difficult or impossible to believe in such an incarnation; it is not a help to them, but a hindrance standing between them and a real, vital belief in Christ and the Gospel. Nor is it possible in this way to have the incarnation of a pre-existent *ethical* Being such as we *must* have for a real incarnation of God. An ethical Being can only be ethically imparted, and this can only be accomplished by a gradual spiritual process. But such conceptions as we have mentioned are wholly unnecessary in order to see the real incarnation of God in Christ.

It is true that we must not only see God in Christ by His spiritual indwelling, but must also account for the Personality that can be so completely receptive of God, and in which God can be so fully present as to be able to express Himself in human form. But God did not then enter the world of man's life for the first time. As the prologue to the Fourth Gospel teaches, "The Divine Word" that became flesh in Christ was *in* the world before this, its highest expression. We see in Christ no mere product of creation, but the culmination of the gradual self-communication of God to men to which the whole Old Testament is witness. In Christ we have the consummation of a gradual, ever-growing incarnation of God in man, which, as the result of an ever-increasing immanence in man through the Spirit, reached its culmination in the birth and life of Jesus Christ. Modern thought should have no difficulty in

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realising this. We believe in evolution ; but why should evolution stop short at the lower, " natural " man and not go on till the higher, spiritual and Divine man is reached ? And, if God is deepest of all in the world's life, must He not become manifest when the human, the highest life in the world, appears in its truth, just as truly as that which was latent in the seed becomes manifest in the flower ? When once " nature " was transcended by man as a spiritual being, new spiritual influences began to operate, and we witness their result in the birth and life of Jesus Christ. As in natural evolution, we are unable to trace the working of the formative forces right on to the new appearance ; but that new appearance is none the less their outcome. And, although in Israel there was general religious decadence when Jesus appeared, yet there was always a line of the humble pious wherein God was working, and it was from amongst those that Jesus came, as He in whom God found complete spiritual entrance into our humanity. I believe that it was towards this very end of His self-communication to and self-expression in man that God was working from the beginning of the creation ; that this was the very ideal and purpose of the creation ; that it was in Israel that He found the chief line of advance therein ; that this was the deepest meaning of the religious movement in this people, which also took up into itself elements from the Divine movement in other

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peoples ; that the results were handed on in the same way as those of all forms of development have been handed on, that the whole movement culminated in the birth of that organism which formed the ground of that Divine-human life in Jesus Christ which was consummated by His complete sacrifice of Himself in the name of Divine Righteousness and Love. It is only, I repeat, by a *gradual* entrance into *humanity*, not by a sudden entrance, or by a birth in one individual in one moment of time, that an *ethical* Being can find self-expression therein. There must be an ethical preparation for the incarnation, organically expressed.

In this way we see not only God *in* man, but God *as* man. We have the incarnation of God in Christ as the result of the orderly and continuous movement of God in human history, as the natural culmination of the creation, indeed ; that in which its Divine ideal and deepest power become manifest. It is the Divine self-realisation in this human world. On the other theory God seems to have been absent from the world, or doing nothing effective for His self-expression therein.

We see also that, while the complete incarnation was the entire possession of Jesus by God—the Divine Life finding its full expression through the Cross—there was in the *humanity* of Jesus as it entered the world a Divine element which found highest expression therein. It was this that was at the foundation of the organic life of Jesus,

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making it possible for Him to be such an organ of the complete Divine indwelling, and it is this which the theories of a miraculous birth and the descent of a Divine Being into the world have sought to account for. It was the manifestation of that Divine immanence in which the creation is grounded and which the indwelling “*Logos*” denotes, that immanence of God in the creation with which His increasing immanence in man through the Spirit is *one*. We must think of this as being eternally in God, and personal in Him, but not a separate Personality. We must think of it as originally coming forth from God, as a moment in an Eternal Divine process, as that in which God Himself comes forth for creation, whether we name it “*Logos*,” or “*Son*,” or think simply of the immanence of God. To understand this is not necessary, of course, for the perception of the real incarnation of God in Christ, but it is to this that a complete explanation of the Person of Christ—so far as human explanations can go—leads us, and it is here that we come into touch with the Church doctrine of the incarnate “*Logos*” or “*Eternal Son*.”

JESUS CHRIST IN THE PRESENT

Lastly, *How are we to think of Jesus in the present? Where is He?* According to the New Testament, the manifestation of God in Christ culminated in what is described as “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This means that through

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Christ and His Cross men became influenced by and conscious of the presence of a Divine Spirit within them which was at once the presence of God and of Christ. This is the essential and the abiding reality in Christianity. The true Christ is He who in His spirit and life—whatever His intellectual beliefs may have been—was wholly one with and entirely possessed by that Holy Spirit which is the presence of God in man, and through whom the presence and power of that Spirit as a Spirit of holy truth and love was brought within the consciousness of all men with saving and new-creating power. If the personality of Christ was wholly one with God in the Spirit, Christ could never be separated from God. When He put off the flesh He did not perish, but entered into that Divine life with which in His spirit He was *one*; He lives in God, and God lives in Him in the highest form in which God has manifested Himself to us and entered our humanity. One with God, He is for ever with us, “our Friend, our Brother and our Lord”—Jesus our Saviour, Leader and King—“able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” On the *human* side, Jesus was one with God and abides in that unity. On the *Divine* side, God was incarnate in Him and remains one with that humanity. Thus we have in Christ a Divine and human Personality ever with us. *This is the true Christ with whom we have to do—* a Christ after and in *the Spirit*. The Christ of

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the Gospels, even the eschatological, is a world-overcoming Christ—that which issues from Him is a world-overcoming and self-conquering *Life* that seeks to possess us and to live and repeat its conquests in us. In the Spirit as revealed in Him, *God* seeks to possess and live in us. Wherever we have this Christ we have God, and wherever we have God we have Christ—one with all truth, with all goodness, with that Spirit of Truth and Love which is the Spirit of the highest life of man.

It is gratifying to find Tyrrell setting forth the same truth so fully. “In us,” he says, “Christ, the Spirit lives and utters Himself in the ever-changing forms of thought and language. To be, as it were, ‘possessed’ by Jesus is to be possessed by the Spirit of God. Those who lay hold of Him, who cluster round Him like swarming bees round their queen, become His very members, quickened by that Spirit which He was; they in Christ and Christ in them; Christ in God and God in Christ, ‘that they may be perfected into one.’”*

* Schweitzer also, in his concluding chapter on the Jesus of Eschatology remarks that “it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen within men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world. . . . In proportion as we have the Spirit of Jesus we have the true knowledge of Jesus.” His work is primarily within the individual, not on the world at large. And “to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.” (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 339, 401.)

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With such a view of Christ we need have no trouble about His real *Resurrection*, whatever our opinion may be regarding the narratives in the Gospels. His death was really His complete entrance in Divine-human form into the fulness of the Divine Life, or, regarded in the light of the Divine in His humanity, it was a return to it—God in His immanence returning to Himself in that Divine-human form which was the goal of the creation—Jesus being thus “the first-born among many brethren.”

God so comes to us in Christ that we realise His presence in His Fatherly Love and Holy Spirit's inspiration ; and in that one Spirit of God and of Christ we find that Christ Himself is for ever with us for the guidance and help that we need in our life and work, and for the realisation in ourselves, in some true measure, of the life that was realised and manifested in Him in its fulness. There is no sensuous presence, but still is it true that

Warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is He ;
And faith has still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

The healing of His seamless dress
Is by our beds of pain ;
We touch Him in life's throng and press
And we are whole again.

Through Him the first fond prayers are said
Our lips of childhood frame ;
The last low whispers of our dead
Are burdened with His name.

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He is the Lord of the spiritual and Eternal Kingdom, and with and under Him are many ministries.

ALLEGED ANALOGIES

But it is said that the person of *Gotama the Buddha* has "passed through an exaltation analogous to that of the person of Jesus. The one is apprehended as the living Buddha, the other as the living Christ. The Indian sage is the very Godhead Himself; the Jewish prophet is indissolubly united with a Person within it. In each case the belief is justified by an appeal to experience." "Why," it is asked, "is the one to be repudiated, while the other is allowed? What difference can be distinguished in their effects so as to counsel the rejection of the one as illusory and the reception of the other as Divine? History, philosophy and religion alike demand that the same measure shall be meted out to both. And, if so, Jesus of Nazareth will find His place as the loftiest leader among the children of men."* This deserves more serious attention than it has received. Certainly, if there be the same rational grounds for this faith in the living Buddha as for that in the living Christ, both beliefs must be held to be equally valid. In itself there can be no reason urged from a Christian standpoint why Buddha should not be alive and a helpful communion found by believers in him. In order

* Principal Carpenter in *Jesus or Christ?*

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to exalt Christianity we do not need to deny the truths in other religions ; rather should they be regarded as witnesses to the faith.

At the same time, it cannot be said that there are the same grounds for belief in the living Buddha as for that in the living Christ. The very fact that Buddha is believed to be " the very Godhead Himself " differentiates the two. Jesus, moreover, is held by believers in Him to have been something more than a " Jewish prophet." As He appears before us (whatever theory may be held of His Person), He is man in whom God was so incarnate that in His Personality He was *already* one—not with " a Person within the Godhead "—but with God in Himself, so one in spirit that He cannot be thought of as separate from God. The human ideal was in Him realised in order that in spirit and power it may be realised in all men. While our Christian faith rises to God as " our Father," we know that He is with us in an infinite number of ways in which His Being has conditioned itself. What Christian faith, regarded in this light, holds is that in the Person of Jesus Christ the Being of God has been so conditioned in a human form that in Christ *God Himself* (not Jesus merely, thought of as separate from God) is with us in a Divine-human Personality to our help and salvation.

But there is, in fact, no real parallel between the two. The deification of Gotama (so far as it went) was not effected till some two centuries

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after his death, and it arose from the felt need of an object to which the human soul could rise. The sect of Japanese Buddhists whose relation to Amida Buddha is elsewhere by the same writer (St. Ninian Lecture in *Religion and the Modern World*), specially adduced as a parallel to the Christian's relation to Christ, dates only from the early part of the thirteenth century after Christ, and it originated in a revolt from the low type of life to which the earlier Buddhism had fallen. It is a testimony to the sense of that need of "Another" (the word actually used) to whom man can look, and whose mind can possess us. It is a witness to Christianity rather than a weakening of it. The best influence of even the earlier Buddhism arose from the fact that that ideal was in certain aspects realised *in an actual person* which in its highest aspects was realised in Christ.* Where is there anything in Buddhism resembling the Pauline Epistles in their relation to the living Christ? And as for "effects," there are few who will say that they are at all comparable with those of faith in Christ.

That the Greeks believed in intercourse with their gods and that Paul regarded them as "demons" is no argument against belief in the living Christ, however much such beliefs may have helped men towards it. It is a question of the *grounds* of the respective beliefs. What the

* See "A Japanese Sect," by James Troup; and, "How Christianity appeals to a Japanese Buddhist," by M. Anesaki; *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. IV., 1 and 2.

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parallels in Indian and other religions (and in Roman Catholicism with its Virgin and saints, after faith in the living Christ had been practically lost) show, is the need felt by the human soul for a manifestation of the Infinite Being in such a form as should enable all to realise His Presence and Help, such as Christians believe has been given us in Christ. If, as the writer referred to says in his St. Ninian Lecture, "historical science opens up to us vast perspectives of aspiration and endeavour where the same needs seem to be met by a like response," this is only what we should expect to see if we believe in the Divine Fatherhood. Why should we not have in Jesus Christ the complete response to these aspirations ?

It has not been all illusion, nor have Christian men and women been grasping at an Ideal merely. The Ideal has been realised in Christ and lives for ever in His Person. Fellowship with Christ was a vital element in the experience of the first Christians. It was this that kept their faith alive, inspired them to service and to sacrifice, strengthened them to suffer and die for Christ. The same experience has been shared in some measure by all who have fully believed in the Divine and human Lord Jesus. It belongs of necessity to the full Christian faith. A dead Christ may be an interesting study for such as have time and inclination for it ; but a dead Christ cannot be an Object of faith or of any real help to men.

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If there is no *living Christ*, the subject has not much interest for this living, struggling, hoping, fearing world. If Jesus Christ be not alive, and if faith cannot rise into helpful and saving communion with Him ; if the Cross was not the triumph of Christ but that of His foes ; if that great and beautiful Personality passed utterly away from us with a cry which, *apart from faith*, may be taken as one of desolation, there is no use pretending that we have still something real left to us *as persons*. The Ideal we cherish may have no reality behind it ; it may be nothing but an illusive light to lead us onward whither we know not. We may speak about " God and Immortality," but they may be only words with which we deceive ourselves and mislead others. Duty remains indeed, Right will be for ever Right, and Love will make its supremacy felt. We must strive to be loyal to these even in the darkness. But if there be no final triumph of these supreme verities in the experience of the *persons*, to illuminate whom they shine, and who have been identified with them ; if the ideal is only to glow before us with no personal realisation of it, we may well ask, What rational meaning is there in the whole of life ? Should we not be apt to say with the Psalmist in his pessimistic mood, " Surely each man walketh in a vain show " ?

It is not an uncharitable thing to say that much of our present unsettlement and scepticism concerning Christ is due to thinking merely about

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a dead Christ of the past, instead of the living Christ of the New Testament and of the present. If men know nothing of *this* Christ, if they think only of a figure in the dim and uncertain past, they are not dealing with the Christ of the Christian Faith at all, and we need not wonder at the strange theories that are invoked to account for the Christianity which only a Christ found to be real in the experience of believers can possibly account for. The Christ they are thinking of is not "the true Christ."

In the face of all these far-fetched theories, the believing soul, as anxious for the truth alone as any of these critics can be, will still repeat the Pauline confession: "I know Him whom I have believed." With one of our most cultured singers such a soul will say:

Subtlest thought shall fail, and learning falter,
Churches change, forms perish, systems go;
But our human needs they will not alter;
Christ no human age shall e'er outgrow.

Yea, Amen! O changeless One, Thou only
Art life's Guide and spiritual goal,
Thou, the light across the dark vale lonely,
Thou, the eternal haven of the soul.

(PRINCIPAL SHAIRP).

CHAPTER V

THE TRUE TEACHER

“Master (or Teacher), we know that thou art true and carest not for any one ; for thou regardest not the person of men ; but of truth teachest the way of God.”

THE flattering words addressed to Jesus by His enemies, who were at that moment seeking to entrap Him, are a remarkable testimony to the natural affinity of the soul for truth, and the perception of its supreme value and authority, even though it should be resisted. They rightly describe the true Teacher as he was seen in Christ.

The true Teacher makes men feel that he is true, genuine, sincere, honest and straightforward. When sure that he knows he speaks with conviction, in accents of authority ; when he does not know, he does not pretend to do so. He “cares not for any one,” in the sense of either fearing man’s disfavour, or courting his approbation. He “regards not the person of men,” whether these are his immediate hearers, or those who occupy the seats of the mighty in Church or State ; his sole concern is to declare what in his inmost soul he is convinced is “the way of God,” whatever may be the consequences to himself. These features certainly all appear to

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the full in Christ, who "taught with authority and not as the scribes," who fearlessly opposed the false religious teaching and practices of His day, who sought no favour of Priest or Scribe, of King or Governor, and who paid the price of His fearless truthfulness with His blood.

At the same time, there were other features worthy of note. He was never rash or inconsiderate in His teaching. He did not needlessly offend sincerely cherished convictions, any more than He would "cast pearls before swine." He showed His sympathy with and love for those whom He knew to be in error; He pitied the weakness that held them back from the truth or "the way of God," as in the case of the rich young ruler. He adapted Himself to the honest inquirer, as with the Scribe who asked Him concerning eternal life. He did "not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets; the bruised reed He would not break, nor quench the smoking flax." He did not stir up opposition, but veiled His teaching in parables; by which method He also stimulated men to think for themselves, so that they might make the truth their own, implying the principles that it is to the true that the truth will reveal itself, and that "to him that hath it shall be given." He employed the language of the people of His time, although He meant it to hold a deeper meaning, speaking in such figures as served to bring the truth home to those who heard Him, and which would also in

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due time yield a deeper significance to those who reflected on them in the light of fuller knowledge. He stated great principles rather than gave detailed rules of conduct, and He represented their action in such terms as at once to attract and impress, speaking in the style which was natural in the circumstances and impressive for all time, but which to the cold eye of the unsympathetic or the mere literalist might seem exaggerated and impossible. He sought to awaken men's spiritual perceptions, even to startle them into attention. But, while He spake with an authority which has never been equalled, He never sought merely to dominate or compel. He appealed to that in man which ought to respond to God and the truth. While He sternly denounced the false and insincere, He could stop in His teaching to notice and bless the little children, who to His mind were the nearest to God. He was "meek and lowly in heart," and to the true soul His "burden was light." It was "the way of God" that He declared, maintaining Himself, not in proud self-sufficiency, but in constant communion with His Heavenly Father. If He put forward His own Person, and called for faith in Himself, it was as the Anointed and Sent of God, not as seeking aught for Himself.

With His teaching He combined practical sympathy and helpfulness. He went about, not merely speaking, but doing good. He held Himself aloof from no one; He was "the friend of

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publicans and sinners." The outcast, the fallen, the moral as well as the physical leper, found in Him a real, sympathetic Helper. He showed His practical sympathy with the hungry multitude, and was unwearied in the expenditure on the sick and suffering of His exceptional healing power. The true Teacher, whether we think of the Church or of the individual, must not teach in words only, but by practical manifestation of the truth. Only thus will the Truth make itself felt to be true.

While He sought to inculcate principles, or to infuse a right spirit into His hearers, rather than to lay down laws, His teaching was, at the same time, *practical*, dealing not with abstract doctrine, but with truth reduced to everyday life and practice. He taught the Fatherhood of God and sonship and brotherhood of man, but He also showed how the realisation of these truths worked out in the life. In the great Manifesto of "The Sermon on the Mount" we see at once His boldness and His practicality. "Moses said unto you—Moses, the great, almost Divine Teacher of the Jews—but *I* say unto you." "This," He said in effect, "is the way of God in truth, to be followed in your daily walk and conversation in the world." He spoke thus because He felt Himself enlightened and commissioned by God to declare the truth.

The substance of His teaching was such as has made Him the great and true Teacher of all time and for all men. For it concerned God and the

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true life of man before Him, and it was not merely given in words but acted out by Himself in His life—in even what seemed its least inviting aspects. God as the Heavenly Father of men was everything with Jesus, and we not only hear about this God and Father, but *see* Him revealed in a life of perfect Sonship. The more we know of other Teachers, the more do we feel, while thankfully acknowledging the truth spoken through others, and without disputing over the question of an originality which might be in itself no proof of truth, that no one can stand by the side of Jesus.

It has been sometimes objected that He did not give explicit guidance on certain subjects, nor deal with all the evils of His time. As a matter of fact, we do not possess the whole of His teaching, but only such portions as His immediate disciples saw fit or were able to gather up and report. We have indications in the Gospels that He was not indifferent to other matters—as in His reference to the “kings of the earth” and other “great ones.” We know how greatly He loved His nation, and sought to save it in its temporal as well as in its eternal interests—weeping over what He foresaw was coming upon it. He did something far more and better than to deal with all kinds of subjects in detail, even had this been possible. His mission was not to teach what belongs to “science, art, literature, politics and industry, the arts of

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administration and government ” as special branches of human interest, but to show the great principle and to inspire the true spirit that should guide men in *every* direction of their activity. He sought to inculcate that spirit and principle of all right living before God and between man and man, which, if taken in earnest and carried out in practice, would not only make men part-takers of the Eternal Life of the Kingdom, but would lead to true individual and social life for time and for eternity, making the earth the Kingdom of God, men and women the true children of the Heavenly Father, and human society His family in which brotherhood reigns.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

It should be specially noted that Jesus came preaching a *Gospel* from God. The effective Teacher must always have a Gospel to proclaim. He cannot place himself on the common level of man's life merely. He must have something to say from God, some Divine message to deliver, something that will attract, cheer and uplift, something that will appeal to that deepest in man which also becomes the highest. He must come as Jesus did with “ good tidings ” from God. Jesus, as we have seen, preached “ the Kingdom ” as something provided by the Heavenly Father for His children beyond the present order. This aspect of the Kingdom was, at least, prominent in His teaching. We make a great mistake,

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I think, when we keep it in the background and lay the chief or the entire stress on the social aspects of the Kingdom. This was not its primary significance with Jesus, and we may find that our wisest course is to follow His example. As Dr. Chadwick remarks in his Note on the Kingdom of God in *Social Relationships in the Light of Christianity*: "If an idea, however attractive and useful, or an interpretation, however plausible at first sight, will not stand the test of the most rigorous examination, we must relentlessly refuse to accept it. To-day," he goes on to say, "we frequently find the phrase 'the Kingdom of God' interpreted as if it were almost, if not entirely, synonymous with 'the ideal social state.'" According to Professor Shailer Matthews in *The Social Teaching of Jesus*, it means "an ideal (though progressively approximated) social order." And we have an example of the extreme position to which earnest men can go along these lines in a quotation from Professor Rauschenbusch in his *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, where he describes the Kingdom of God as being "a collective conception involving the whole social life of man. It is not a matter of saving human atoms, but of saving the social organism. It is not a matter of getting individuals to heaven, but of transforming the life on earth into the harmony of heaven." Dr. Chadwick's own conception of the Kingdom, as it has actually come through the self-sacrifice of Christ, is that

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it is equivalent to the righteousness of God, active and energising in man ; it is “ the rule and power of God in human character, expressed in human conduct.” This is no doubt true of the Kingdom as Jesus spoke of it, as something “ the word ” of which was to be received ; as it begins in the heart, and as it has actually come in its spiritual power.

But what one feels in view of the preaching of Jesus is, that when we lay the chief stress on the “ establishment of the Kingdom of God on the earth as the result of Christian influences ” we omit a very essential element of the Gospel. The social aspect is doubtless embraced in the conception of “ the Kingdom,” but this alone would be no real, present Gospel to men such as Jesus preached in His day. It was to devotion to *God* that Jesus sought to bring men—to *religion*, not to social well-being merely or primarily. His Gospel was that of a Kingdom of God that was *near*, not merely to be realised in a distant future after those who heard Him were in their graves, having found no amelioration or redress for themselves, whatever might come to posterity. The Gospel of a perfected world, after those who are now in it are out of it, is no Gospel to the living man or woman. Christ’s was a Gospel “ preached to the poor,” the persecuted, the oppressed, a Gospel which promised real, personal deliverance and future blessedness to them. No doubt the deliverance began by

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receiving God into their hearts ; there was the promise of all real and eternal good in that. His Gospel was founded on the drawing nigh of God in His pitying and forgiving love to their salvation. But the coming Kingdom which men were to enter was very real, and realistically presented. It was the reign of God in a renovated world, on an earth wherein should dwell nothing but "righteousness." The Kingdom, we know, did not come in that form ; we must interpret it in this aspect, in the light of the event, as a Kingdom of God in an unseen and eternal sphere ; and, if we would be true to the teaching of Christ, we must put this in the forefront of our preaching as that which the loving Father has provided for His children, which He offers us in spite of our sin and unworthiness, and which He seeks to save us for. In this alone can we have Eternal Salvation, and only therein is there *any* salvation for many

The great word of Jesus to men may be summed up in His saying : " Seek ye first the Kingdom and the Righteousness of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." This does not mean, as it is often interpreted, " Seek to bring the Kingdom and Righteousness of God on the earth," but, " Seek the Kingdom as your own God-designed eternal inheritance, and therefore also the righteousness which alone can make you a partaker in it. Seek this first, instead of those other things which ' the heathen ' who know not God seek. Seek it so that your treasure

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—that which you most care for—may be in heaven, not on earth, that your heart may be in heaven also. Seek it with the earnestness of those who strive to enter in at the straight gate, and who would take the Kingdom by violence.”

But it will be said that this is “other-worldliness.” Certainly it is so in the best and truest sense; but it is such other-worldliness as would prove the best thing, not only for the individual soul, but for all who are in this present world. If there is any truth in our religion at all, our supreme interest lies in that other world, and to place it there does not mean that we shall neglect any true interest of this world. This world of time and sense is ours for a short time only; that other world is eternal. We are here that we may be fitted for and rise into an eternal life in God. It is *this*-worldliness that is the greatest snare of the soul, and the greatest curse to this world. It is because men and women are so keen on getting the riches and goods of this present world, as if there was nothing better to be gained, that there is that perpetual strife in which the badly circumstanced suffer so greatly and the weakest go to the wall. If our treasure was in heaven, with our Father there, and our supreme aim to be our Father’s true children, as Jesus exhorts, this would be a very different world to live in. Mark, it is not mere other-worldliness that is enjoined; it is supreme devotion to God, and it is inseparably joined to

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and conditioned by *righteousness*. We cannot seek the Kingdom of God for ourselves, with any hope of gaining it, without at the same time seeking "the righteousness of God." And is it not just the seeking of this Divine righteousness by all men that would make even this present world right? Nothing but such righteousness will ever do it. This world has seen many great civilisations, with much development of intelligence and of power. But where are all those Empires, etc., which have flourished so splendidly in the past? *Perished for want of righteousness*. So will it be with all others where God's righteousness is not supremely sought. It is righteousness alone that "exalts a nation," and gives stability. And that which must be sought is the perfect righteousness of God. Nor is this a selfish quest for the individual. On the contrary, it is that which carries him out of himself to God and to all that is of God, and for the highest well-being of his fellows.

Whatever may be thought of the nearness or of the location of the Kingdom in Christ's teaching, we have here the great and lasting principle of the true life of man as created in the image of God, and destined to eternal life. We have in it that which can bring the Kingdom of God to this earth, in as far as it can ever be realised here. For it amounts to this "Seek so to live as to be approved of God; seek to do His perfect will; seek to be the true children of your Heavenly Father, perfect in love as He is perfect." Is not

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this the only thing that can ever bring about a real brotherhood of men? It is to be feared that in giving predominantly another significance to our Lord's great principle we are really keeping back that which we long to see, even in this world, and at the same time failing to proclaim the full Gospel to men.

But it may be said that such a counsel was given in the belief that the kingdom would be speedily set up, and therefore men need not be anxious about the world so soon to pass away. It must be acknowledged that in the setting in which we find this saying in St. Luke's Gospel this seems to be the truth. It is accompanied by the counsel; "Sell all that ye have and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not; Let your loins be girded about, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding. Be ye ready also; for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not." Of course, this is susceptible of a spiritual interpretation; the Son of Man comes to each one at death. But, taken eschatologically, it does not in the least affect the *principle*; it only shows the presence of a *Spirit* in Jesus deeper than the forms of the time could express, or the people, perhaps, understand.*

* The eschatological Christ, Schweitzer holds, restores Jesus to us in His world-negating and world-overcoming spirit and power. The general affirmation of the world, "if it is to be Christian, must in the individual spirit be Christianised and transfigured by the personal rejection of the world which is preached in the sayings of Jesus. It is only by means of the

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OBJECTIONS TO CHRIST'S TEACHING

But it has been objected (although, really, it scarcely deserves serious notice) that Jesus stated the following out of His principle in a way that is not practicable—a way that would discourage thrift and forethought, and make the ordinary business of life impossible. “Take no thought for your life,” we read in the A.V., “what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for the body what ye shall put on—your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Take no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” It should not be necessary to say that, of course, to “take no thought” means as the R.V. renders the word, “Be not anxious,” or even “over-anxious,” as Dr. Weymouth has it. To understand to “take no thought” as if it meant not to think at all about things, or exercise forethought, is not only, one almost says, wilfully wrong, but to take the saying with such a ridiculous literalism as would land us in downright absurdity. It would be a counsel manifestly impossible to follow anywhere and at any time. It would not only do what the critics of Jesus say

tension thus set up that religious energy can be communicated to our time.” Modern Theology, for the sake of peace, has been in danger of denying the world negation in the sayings of Jesus. Its Jesus has been made a man of our time. It has thus got on to a false track, and the world has entered the Church (*Op. cit.*, pp. 400, 401).

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it would, but would lead us to the foolish assertion that Jesus held that it was wrong to weave cloth for raiment and to sow the fields with seed for bread. Not merely "insurance" and ordinary business arrangements would be thus condemned, but none of those natural and necessary actions, by our attention to which alone we can get what God provides, and apart from which man could not live at all, could be undertaken. They cannot be done without taking some, and often much, "thought for the morrow." It is a poor kind of criticism that would land itself in such absurdities as are its own refutation. It ought to be plain to anyone that what Jesus means is, not that men should take no reasonable thought or care about the future, or about things necessary for their life, but that they ought not to set their hearts on such things or let anxiety about them distract their thoughts from the one supreme concern. How could a reasonable being honour God by failing to use the reason which God has given him, or by neglecting to take the opportunity open to him of making provision for necessary things? How would he be thus following righteousness? Did not Jesus in this same sermon, teach men to pray to their Heavenly Father for their daily bread? Why should they so pray if they ought to "take no thought" concerning it. But, so praying and at the same time doing their duty, let them trust their Heavenly Father for all needful things and not

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allow anxiety concerning them to draw their minds away from the one thing which should be supreme. It was the avoidance of this distraction that Jesus had in view. And indeed, even in view of earthly things, worry and anxiety do not help but hinder us. They are amongst the greatest enemies of life.

A more reasonable criticism would be to say that, in the complex civilisation of to-day, when men are so greatly dependent on their fellows for the opportunity to *work* that they may live, Christ's principle is not practicable, or at least, so easy to carry out. What of the unemployed, for example—the men and women who can get no work to do? It must be admitted, I think, that there is a difference. What was easy in the simple life of Palestine is not easy to-day, as many a poor, honest, struggling man knows to his cost. But, as already pointed out, it is just because *men as a whole* do not act on the great principle of Jesus, but seek first to “lay up treasures on earth,” instead of “laying them up in heaven” by living as the sons of God and brothers to their fellows, that such a condition of things can arise. What Jesus sought to see was *God*, not Mammon, King of men, supreme in their thoughts even in the time then present. He had in view God's good will for all in its unimpeded action, God's provision for all available for all. He knew very well that, even in the simpler life of Palestine, there were many who knew not where to get their daily bread, and He

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sought to dethrone the false powers that kept it from them, by leading men to make the will of the all-loving Father supreme. He laid down a principle meant to find universal application, and it is for His followers to see that it finds such application. Till it does so, the will of God and His actual provision for His children cannot come to them as a whole as it is meant to do. Meanwhile, those who know that there are human causes which prevent their brethren from getting the full good of their Heavenly Father's will, are bound to see to it, that, in some way, all shall have open to them what is necessary for their full and true life here on earth, and which it is God's will they should have. To think of self merely is quite contrary to the spirit and teaching of Christ. There is nothing to hinder men and women, amidst all the complexities of modern life, from acting out the principle of Jesus, from carrying it out, not in an irrational literalism, but in the spirit of it; and if this were universally done, there would be want for none who were willing to act righteously. At the same time, even *now*, amid all these complexities, and in the face of the terrible fact of unemployment, the man or woman who takes up Christ's principle in earnest, doing his or her best, and trusting in God, will find that what Jesus said is true—that "in some way or other the Lord will provide." If this be not so, then a tremendous responsibility rests on those who make it otherwise.

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That it is quite impossible to carry out any of these sayings in bald literalism, is the sufficient proof that they were never meant to be so taken, even though the time before the Kingdom came was short. What kind of world would it make, for example, if everyone who was smitten on the one cheek should actually turn the other to the smiter, or if to every thief who stole your cloke you should literally divest yourself of your coat and give it to him? What would be the consequence in a cold, frosty day, and what when all your garments had been given away? The simple fact that very few persons have such experiences literally ought to show how absurd is a literal interpretation. So of other similar sayings. When we ask God to forgive us our debts "as we forgive our debtors," this cannot mean that we should remit all the money that is lawfully due to us by others, and so, not only deprive ourselves of our daily bread, but degrade the manhood of those so treated by us, and encourage general dishonesty. Should we be true sons of our Father if we acted like this? In all these sayings Jesus meant that we should be raised in spirit above being too greatly troubled by outward happenings; that our trust in God should keep our minds from worry and anxiety, good neither for time nor eternity, and quite unsuitable for the "sons of God"; that we should trust and act as our Father's children on earth, the fulness of whose life is yet to come, and is now being "laid up for

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us'' by our own attitude and action here. He meant that men should cherish the heavenly Father's Spirit of Love; that they should be truthful, charitable, non-litigious, non-worldly in their spirit and conduct. To take His teaching in a merely literal way is to show, not only lack of imagination, but want of common sense, or, what is worse, anxiety to make out a case against the Teacher at any cost.

Much has been made of His teaching concerning Divorce. But, comparing the three accounts in Matt. v. 31, 32; xix. 3-9; Mark x. 2-12, it is quite clear that what Jesus taught was that, although Moses suffered them, for the hardness of their hearts, to put away their wives for various causes, according to the law of God it was wrong for the man to put away his wife, or the woman her husband, except for the one cause of fornication; which surely was sound teaching directed against a crying evil of the time. He did not "prohibit the marriage of divorced persons." What He did say was that the marriage-union was indissoluble, save for one reason only, and that whosoever put away his wife for any other reason caused her to commit adultery if she married again, *because* in the sight of God she was still the wife of her first husband. It was in the interest of the woman that He was speaking.

Again, if He used the common relation of debtor and creditor to illustrate the duty of forgiveness, the very fact that it was *mercifulness* He was

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inculcating implies His condemnation of the cruel practices that were common. To imagine for one moment that Jesus could have approved of these, or that He needed to give special expression to His disapprobation of them, shows a strange ignorance of the spirit of the great Teacher.

Reference has already been made to *Eschatology*. It need only be further said here that it would be absurd to interpret everything He said in this connection literally. His language was based on the Old Testament, and His sayings about "coming on the clouds of heaven," and such like, are no more to be taken literally than when He speaks of the stars of heaven falling, the sun being darkened and the moon refusing to give her light. It is the common figurative language of prophecy, such as we find in Isaiah xiii. 10; xxxiv. 4, etc., with reference to earthly powers. As already remarked, He does not speak of the end of the *world*, but of the *age*, when the judgment of the Jewish nation should take place, along with the revelation of Himself as the true Christ. All that He predicted *did* spiritually and truly come to pass. If in *Eschatology* He entertained the conceptions of His time and place, this would only show us the sphere to which His mission and illumination belonged. The Spirit of God does not directly teach concerning such matters; they belong to the *form* of things, not to their spiritual and essential truth.

Similar remarks apply to His alleged belief

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in *Demoniacal possession* as have been made with reference to Eschatology. Physiology, Psychology and Medicine as sciences were all outside his special field as truly as Astronomy and Cosmogony. But it is not at all certain that Jesus actually believed that those whom He cured were possessed by demons. He had to treat them as such, according to their own belief, in order to cure them. It ought also to be said that, in the opinion of some who ought to be able to judge from what they have seen in China and elsewhere, demoniacal possession may be even now a reality.

It is in virtue of His ethical and spiritual teaching, interpreted, not according to a narrow literalism such as we should not apply to any other Teacher, but broadly, in the spirit and with common sense, and of His life in its entire devotion to God, perfect trust in the Heavenly Father and complete acceptance of His will, and victory over the world, that Jesus stands as the true Teacher for the men of all time. His teaching—whether absolutely original or not—approves itself to the inner man as true, and if we take it up in earnest and carry it out in practice, it will verify itself in our experience, always remembering that for its complete verification its universal adoption is necessary. It will be found that the more we make it one of the true things to “think” on, so as to put it into practice, the more will real good be found by us individually and by all with whom we are associated. It is the only thing that can

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ever bring to men the good for which they were created ; for it is “ the Way of God in Truth.” In the face of all criticism, we can still confidently say, in the words of one* who criticised certain aspects of what he regarded as the teaching of Christ as boldly as any recent writer has done :

O Thou great Friend to all the sons of men,
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
And call Thy brethren forth from want and woe.

We look to Thee ! Thy Truth is still the Light
Which guides the nations groping on their way,
Stumbling and falling in disastrous night,
Yet hoping ever for the perfect day.

Yes ! Thou art still the Life ; Thou art the Way
The holiest know ; Light, Life and Way of heaven :
And they who dearest hope and deepest pray,
Toil by the Light, Life, Way, which Thou hast given.

“ THE KINGDOM ” AND HIS ETHICAL TEACHING

All this is true, let it be said once more, whatever we may believe respecting the *form* of His teaching and although He expected the Kingdom to be shortly established by God on the earth. There is nothing in this view of the Kingdom that detracts from the moral and spiritual teaching of Christ. That teaching was by no means incidental merely, as Tyrrell asserts, but in an inseparable connection with the preaching of the Kingdom. It was the setting forth of its special nature, and of the spirit and character necessary for admission to it. It holds good whatever conception we

* Theodore Parker.

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may entertain of the form of the Kingdom ; wherever it may be situated, and however it may come. In one sense it is true that (as Tyrrell says) in the Kingdom morality should be ended. That is, morality as we know and practise it on earth should be transcended, because in all belonging to the Kingdom its deepest principle of *Love* shall reign. It shall be transcended and perfected as it is in God. The moral life is not the highest life of man, but the spiritual life, which in its perfectness is life in unison with God. It was such a life that Jesus presented in His own Person, to which He called men and sought to raise them. He taught the Fatherhood of God, not as an abstract truth, but in order that men should look to Him, trust in Him as such, rise above the world and self merely, and be His sons by being like Him in love and righteousness. It was the right *inner spirit* that He insisted on in opposition to all that was outward merely. His religion was an intensely spiritual one ; it was oneness with God, possession by the Spirit of God as that Spirit filled and went forth from Himself. Therefore His teaching became centred in His personality, which could be described and realised as *Christ crucified and risen again*. And we have, as Paul found, the abiding significance and power of the whole in the presence and indwelling of the Spirit of God and of Christ. Still, we must ever and again return to His teaching in order to learn the true nature of that Spirit.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRUE CHURCH

“The Church of the Living God.”

“Ye are the Body of Christ.”

THE question, Which is the true Church? has at times been so keenly contested that the denial of what one party affirmed has been visited by torture and death. Men in the present are less interested in it, except, perhaps, such as are under the spell of some of the great churches of Christendom and are feeling the bondage of their position. The general feeling is that for the true Church of Christ we must look wider than to any particular body, wider than to all “the churches” put together. But if we ask, *What is the true conception of the Church?* the question is a very important one, especially in connection with the further question, *How far are the churches as they exist actually realising it?*

Without a doubt the history of churches in the past presents some sad reading, and it is to be feared that much of their work to-day falls short of what ought to be effected. Without joining in the common cry against “the churches,” there does seem to be something wrong or wanting on the part of the churches as a whole. Many

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are nobly striving to fulfil their mission, often in the face of great difficulties. But, taking them as a whole, the expenditure of thought and effort and means which they represent does not appear to be so adequately productive, either spiritually or socially, as might be fairly expected. Doubtless much of the new humanitarian and social spirit which characterises our times is due to influences which have been fostered and sent forth through the churches; great moral and social advances have been made under Christianity. Still, the leadership of that which is "the Church of the living God" and the "Body of Christ" in the world ought to have been more manifest and effective, and both moral and social interest more suffused with the religious spirit. Morality often maintains itself as quite independent of religion, and much of the social and humanitarian interest of our time is dissociated from religious interests. It has but little sympathy with the spiritual and eternal aims which the Church stands for, and apart from which man's true life cannot be gained. In not a few instances these are disowned entirely. The strength of the war-spirit and of merely material interests, along with the growing religious indifference, make it certain that our civilisation is not being permeated as it ought to be with the spirit of Christianity. The growth of the fleshly element and of a lax morality in so much of our fiction, the increase of gambling, of the excessive craving for mere amusement, and of luxurious

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living by the side of those who are struggling for a bare existence, are other features that create serious questioning. It is terrible also to witness the immorality, degradation, hopeless poverty and misery which, in our large cities especially, are to be found side by side with our churches and very slightly affected by them. It is awful to think of the young lives that are being wrecked in the midst of our busy church life, left to drift hopelessly till they sink in the dark waters of sin and despair. No doubt in many places there are "missions," earnest individual workers, and active churches doing their best. But there is a lack of *general interest* and of readiness to lend a helping hand in the great work of seeking and saving the lost which Christ came to do, and which He sent forth His disciples to continue in His name. Far more also could be done in the way of the prevention that is better than cure, if the churches were thoroughly awake to the necessity, with respect to the young especially. Sunday school work is often carried on in the most perfunctory and ineffective manner, and by many churches no provision is made for receiving children as members, or for preventing their drifting away from the Church. Their relation to Christ is not recognised, and for this reason that which should be the chief care of the Church is sadly neglected. Those who support the churches too often lack Christian enthusiasm. Many churches are becoming rather centres of social

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interest, and even of amusement or entertainment, than powers to uplift men and women above the world and themselves into the higher life and activities set before us by Christ. Their motives may be good, but the results are questionable. Many seem to stand for little more than the maintenance of a form of worship which our forefathers observed and from which we do not feel free to cut ourselves off ; but, as for any deep meaning or high purpose in it, there is little or none. The Church has become too much an accepted institution, and the ministry too greatly a profession, with its emoluments and even prizes, and churches are not infrequently kept going by a variety of means, some of them of a questionable nature, in rivalry with neighbouring churches. They have come, in more ways than one, to depend on the patronage and support of the world which they are here to convert. All this tends to divert from the Church the interest of earnest and thoughtful souls, and to make one ask whether, in spite of all the good they do, the churches, as they are, are fulfilling the ideal of Christ. They certainly answer the purpose which Herbart said they fulfilled, as being " necessary to the State as the inner spiritual bond which holds men in peace when their material interests are liable to conflict " ; but in doing this are they not neutralising instead of fulfilling the ideal of Him who came " not to bring peace but a sword " ? There is no greater enemy to good than a false peace :

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“ Woe unto them,” said the prophet, “ who cry, ‘ Peace ! Peace ! ’ when there is no peace.” It is only the sword of Christ that can bring the true and lasting peace.

It is true, indeed, that the distinction between “ the Church and the world ” is not so sharply marked to-day as it was in earlier times. Due as this largely is to Christian influences operating in ways unseen, it is one of the best testimonies we have to the influence of the Church. There is, no doubt, much of that which should characterise the Church to be seen in “ the world ” ; and we cannot unchristianise men and women because they do not go to church. In those outside the churches we sometimes see a higher morality and a more humane spirit than in those within them. There is also alas, much of the world in the Church, so that the distinction between them is largely lost. Some say that there ought to be no such distinction. But, while the world also is God’s, and the self-same life that ought to find its highest expression in the Church is seeking to express itself in all the life, work and relations of men, the Church and the world (as it actually shapes itself on the whole) are not to be confounded. The Church ought to have and to make manifest its possession of a higher life than that which contents the world. She exists to impart this higher good to the world, to convert and win the world to herself. But before this can be effectually done, she must cast out the worldly

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element from herself and be really the representative of that Christ who "overcame the world." This same overcoming of "the world" is, in one aspect, the great task before each individual soul.

It has been often told how the Church that went forth to conquer the world, and was very largely successful in the enterprise, was ere long in large measure conquered by the world. There have been purgations from time to time, but there is still a large amount of the world in the Church. So much of an earthly or worldly element has entered into the greater churches of Christendom, especially, that the real nature of Christianity has been obscured. What the Gospel brings to men has been largely identified with temporal good. That higher and eternal good which God has created us to receive, and which He sends to the poor, the suffering, the sinful, in Christ, is not recognised as it was in the days when the Church was persecuted and oppressed. Not a few in our churches seem not to believe in that higher good or to feel any pressing need for it; they are so comfortable and contented in the world as they are. And because earthly good does not come to men as a whole through the Church, as they desire it, they turn away from the churches and say that Christianity has failed. It is not made sufficiently clear that while Christianity tends to promote all manner of well-being in general, with, however, it may be, many exceptions, where suffering for the sake of

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Christ may be called for, the Church of Christ stands *primarily* for a far higher kind of good than anything earthly—one that is open to the poorest and humblest, and without which the richest and greatest of earth are to be pitied—the good of a right relationship to God and man, of sonship to God and brotherhood to man, the riches of a true personality in conformity to Christ, issuing in Eternal Life, man's only real and inalienable possession. It was in this good of "conformity to the image of His Son" that the first Christians rejoiced, even though "accounted as sheep for the slaughter" and "killed all the day long"; and to make them partakers therein they could see even the most adverse things of life "all working together," because this was the eternal purpose of God. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Do we walk on this high level to-day? This does not mean that the true Church of Christ can ever be indifferent to the world as God has related us to it; on the contrary, it is for Christians to carry into and express in the world, in all their activities therein, the higher life which inspires the Church. Nor can the true Church ever be careless of the earthly well-being of men, or concern itself only with "saving souls," to the neglect of the bodies apart from which souls cannot here exist, or of the environment which has so great an influence on their condition and receptivity to higher things. Never has the Church shown greater regard for

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the well-being of men on the earth than in the days when the spiritual and eternal were with her supreme. The missionary and social work of the early Church was all that could be desired, all that was then possible indeed. Even in later times the Church was in many ways the friend and often the protector of the poor and oppressed. It is sad to remember that the Reformation, so fruitful in good to the soul, sank so soon into an individualism in religion, which reached its height under the commercialism of more recent times, when the Church stood by, almost unconcerned with the fate of the toiling masses. The Evangelical Revival under Wesley was the birth of a better spirit, but it was long ere the Church awoke to the clamant social claims upon her. Individual Christians acted nobly ; but under the eye of the Church even slavery had long continuance, and the mass of workers, including little children, were left to toil under conditions which we regard with shame to-day to enrich the members of churches. The same apathy reigned with respect to the heathen abroad. Since then the Church has risen to face her duty both in the mission field and in the social sphere, and is apparently seeking earnestly to atone for the past. Still, very much remains to be done.

It is not direct action against social evils and injustices merely that is needed, but the implanting of *true estimates of value* in the thoughts of men. The more clearly the Church herself perceives

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the true good, the more manifest she makes it in her practice that she does perceive it, and the more earnestly she seeks to bestow it on others, the less store will men come to set by mere earthly good in itself, and the result will be its wider and juster distribution. It is only the false estimates of value that lead men and women to grasp and hold selfishly the material good that is necessary for the life of all. If the Church is to witness effectually for Christ, she must be more Christ-like in her spirit and character. She must herself set less value on earthly good and more on the spiritual and eternal. She must imitate that example of life *above* the world, yet *for* the world in its highest interests, which was given her by Him whom she calls her Lord, to represent and serve whom she is here. The danger before churches when they are prosperous is that by this very prosperity they set such a false estimate of value before men as annuls to a great extent what they in words proclaim. Of course, prosperity is necessary if a church is to effectually undertake and accomplish its work; often a church cannot help being prosperous; but it is needful at the same time for those who represent such churches to make very plain in what estimate they hold mere earthly good in view of the higher good with which they are entrusted and which they preach to men as that which they should care for supremely. We may not be called to a literal imitation of Jesus and the preachers whom

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He sent forth, or to follow the example of the "poor friars" who preached effectively to the people as long as they were "poor." But, if we remember that many to whom we offer a spiritual Gospel (good and true for them as it is) are struggling for daily bread, and often do not know where to find it, we cannot wonder that they should turn away from what is offered them by those who are well-circumstanced themselves, but who make no serious effort to help them in their daily battle for life. To say that the Church has no mission in this respect is to deny the *Love* that we preach. The separation between "clergy" and "laity" also, as if there were two different orders of men in the sight of God, counteracts in another way the true influence of a Church. Even that between "minister and people" has a tendency to obscure the universal priesthood of believers, and to limit their Christian service.

"The true Church" is, of course, *an ideal conception* to which anything earthly can only approximate. It is the Body of Christ, and to be this perfectly is the ideal. Its members are all who are inspired by the Spirit of Christ, whether united in any outward organisation or not. The "visible Church" consists of all professing Christians, most of whom are members of some organisation termed "a church," belonging, as a rule, to some "denomination," or "church" in a wider sense. With those churches may be associated many who do not seriously even profess

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to be Christians and into them may enter much that is human merely, or even positively unchristian. We do not find Jesus, in any sayings the genuineness of which is beyond reasonable question, speaking as if He contemplated the formation of a Church in the later ecclesiastical sense. He spoke of "the Kingdom of God" rather than of "the Church." No doubt He thought of His followers as united as a *community*, and being as such "the light of the world" and "the salt of the earth"; according to the fourth Gospel He emphasised their unity and their life of mutual love as bearing witness to Himself, and as that which should lead the world to believe. It was rather a great Brotherhood of Love, acknowledging the one Divine Father, with Himself as Lord and Master, than an ecclesiastical institution with its graded offices and authority, into which so much that was of man merely might find a place, that He had in view. "Sacraments" and "Clergy" were foreign to His thought: "Call no man Master," He said. Priesthood was spiritual and universal with His immediate followers. Ministration, with Christ, meant service, and the one who served most humbly and fully should be the greatest amongst His disciples. How very different it has been in the history of churches! Still, the Christian Church had a natural and necessary origin as the expression and instrument of the Spirit that animated all Christians. Inevitably, the disciples of Christ

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became united in believing communities, meeting together for worship, edification, mutual sympathy and help, for the spread of the Gospel and the service of the Kingdom. These assemblies in Jewish quarters took their form from the Synagogues, and in Gentile regions from the popular assemblies—the *ekklesiai*. They had their officials selected according to the gifts possessed by them and for the purposes that were necessary; but their government—at first under supervision of the Apostles—was democratic and for long of the simplest nature. There was no “Apostolic succession,” and not for many a day did any individual church venture to claim a primacy over the rest. In order to do the work of Christ, Christians still need to be organised, but it is open to them to form their organisations in whatever way shall in their judgment best serve Christian ends, in other words, as the Spirit of life within them moves them to.

The ideal conception of the Church, as stated by St. Paul and on all hands acknowledged, is that it is *the Body of Christ* in the world, the special organ of the Holy Spirit of God. But the Holy Spirit is not confined to any humanly organised “Church,” and it is in the first instance the possession of individual believers. Only as dwelling in individuals can the Spirit possibly dwell in and act through the Church. It may dwell in persons who are outside of all churches. The one body of Christ has many members both

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in respect of individual persons and of individual churches—all animated by the one Spirit and striving in their own way, in the light of the Divine purpose and Will, to serve God. Wherever men and women are found animated by the Spirit of Christ *there* are real members of His Body, whether they are united in a church or not. Still, in the unity of a church, and more fully in the unity of all the churches, there should be, if all the conditions be fulfilled, a larger measure of the Spirit's presence and power than there can be in individual Christians and churches.

No organisation in the world to-day can claim to be *the one* true Church of which all Christians ought to be members. Amongst the many churches and agencies that are striving to serve Christ there is only one that makes such a claim. We are not unmindful of the services which the Church of Rome was in many ways enabled to render to the cause of Christ and of humanity in the dark days of the past, or of the many eminent saints that have adorned her communion and preserved her life as a Church, or of the earnest Christian souls within her communion at present, whether acknowledged by the central authority or not; but no more can we forget the reverse side of her history. If the appeal were made simply to history, there is more to refute than there is to support her claim. And, whatever good purposes she has served in the past, her claim to be the one and only true Church has never had

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any but the slenderest foundation. It is indeed surprising to see, in the face of such a stupendous claim, how inadequate are her grounds and how weak her defences as they are presented by some of her chief representatives. Take, for example, the argument of the Right Rev. Monsignor Vaughan in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1908. He rests the claim of Rome to be the one true Church chiefly on the need of "unity in the spiritual order—the special mark of God's Church is *Unity*." This unity is not to be found in any other body than that of Rome. Such unity implies infallibility on the part of the Head of the Church, which is found in the Pope as the successor of Peter, who, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, "speaks with the infallible authority conferred on him by God." The machinery of the Catholic Church is such that these infallible decisions can be carried everywhere and made obligatory on all.

But the unity that the writer has in view is only "doctrinal unity," intellectual unity, not that unity of the Spirit which is the true Christian unity. The divisions in opinion outside the Catholic Church, suggest, he says, "a sort of ecclesiastical Noah's ark, or spiritual zoological garden—in which all varieties of religious specimens and products, ancient and modern, are gathered together and enclosed by some fanciful wall of charity and mutual regard." This is a very charitable view from outside the wall! But, why not all these varieties? Christianity is a

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Life—not a mere Creed or set of beliefs, which all must equally accept, whether their reason and Christian conscience can regard them as true or not. Christ's sheep have many varieties among them. Nurtured on infinite truth, they cannot be all of one breed. As for the wall that keeps them together, it was a greater than any Pope who said that "Charity (Love) is the bond of perfectness." A still higher authority declared: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Not in doctrine but in *Love* did Jesus place the unity of His disciples. When He prayed "that they all might be one," it was that they all might be one in that love which was the life of God in Himself. To substitute doctrine for life, intellectual agreement for love, is to depart very far from Christ. Even that unity of the Catholic Church can only in any extensive measure be realised under compulsion, by her members forsaking the "freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free" and becoming again "entangled in a yoke of bondage." It has had to be enforced by penalties, the torture-chamber, the sword and the stake. Surely, such methods of securing doctrinal unity were never inspired by the Spirit of Christ; surely, in seeking such a unity men were engaged in a pursuit to which Christ did not call them, one in which they had forsaken Christ, and become, instead of sheep in the Good Shepherd's flock, "ravaging wolves." How

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different from the love which lived in Him, which forbade the visiting of men with penalties, and which Paul so nobly sang as that charity apart from which all faith and works were nothing. And, after all, has this boasted unity ever actually existed? History says No, and Modernism is a witness that it does not exist to-day.

Infallibility is admittedly necessary in order to this unity. But where is it to be found? In the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*, it is said. But which Pope? Have the Popes always said the same thing? Has there always been but one Pope? And did not many faithful sons of the Church earnestly protest when infallibility was transferred from the Church to the Pope?

This infallibility resides, we are told, in the Pope as the successor of Peter. But it is well known to such as do not choose to shut their eyes that it is a question whether Peter was ever Bishop of Rome. Even if he had been, how does this confer infallibility on either Peter or his successors, whatever their character? Our Lord never said that Peter was infallible. The moment after He praised him for his confession, the fallibility of Peter was manifested, and he received the rebuke, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not of the things of God, but of the things of men." Have not the Popes too often shown themselves the successors of *this* Peter?

The words of Christ to Peter are quoted: "Thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will build

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my Church.” But our Lord did not say that He would build His Church on *Peter*. Surely it was rather on the rock of the confession which Peter made of Jesus as the Christ. If it was on Peter, it was on him as confessing Christ. But where does his *successor* come in? There is no mention of him at all. There is no warrant for extending to a hypothetical successor what was said to Peter. If successors come into view at all, it can only be as continuing that confession which Peter made as the rock-basis of Christ’s Church. The power of binding and loosing that was given to Peter, and which is practically equivalent to that of the keys, is in Matthew xviii. conferred on all the disciples. But it is quite uncertain whether the whole saying relative to “the Church” in Matt. xviii. is not a later addition to the Gospel. Monsignor Vaughan points out that as our Lord spoke in Aramaic, in which language the same word, *kepha* would be used in both places, the stress that non-Catholics lay on the difference between Πέτρος and Πέτρα falls to the ground. But he possibly forgets that if our Lord spake in Aramaic, He did not use the term *ecclesia* but one with much simpler associations.

The writer employs what seems a very simple illustration in the comparison of the Church to a tree, all the parts of which are correlated and uniform in their relations. “The leaves represent the Catholic laity throughout the entire world. They are in direct communion with their parish

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priests (the smaller branches of the mystical tree). The priests in their turn are in direct communion with their bishops (*i.e.* the larger branches). And all the bishops are in direct and constant communion with the Sovereign Pontiff, *i.e.*, the trunk or stem of the entire tree." "Every twig and leaf, even the most remote, is fed by the sap rising from the one trunk." Very pretty, but far from Christian. If *Christ* were substituted for *Pope*, there would be something in it. How *can* it be forgotten that Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and ye are the branches." Not the Pope, nor Peter, nor any *man*, but Christ Himself is the trunk of the tree through which the Divine sap rises and flows to all the branches. Peter was but a branch in that Vine, like the rest—a branch that needed a severe pruning, too. To no one lower than Christ Himself has the function of the stem been committed. To no one lower than Himself *can* it be committed. True, He is invisible. But it is just into the invisible that our faith must rise; in it our life must be rooted, and from the living Christ it must draw its nurture. If there be no living Christ in whom we are branches, our Christianity is words only, a thing of earth and of man merely. To put a mortal man in the place of the living Christ is surely the greatest error possible for Christians to make.

We are thus led back to the idea of the Church as *the Body of Christ*, as that which manifests the Divine Life and does the work of God in the world.

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It is *the Spirit of Christ*, not doctrines about Him nor forms of government, not intellectual nor external unity, but “Love in the Spirit,” that is the life of the Church and the source of its unity. Where Christ’s Spirit rules, *there* is the Church of Christ ; and according to the measure of its rule will there be real vital unity. Mere outward unity is in itself a barren conception. The value of unity depends on the motive inspiring it. It was not for the sake of mere unity that Jesus prayed “that they all might be one” ; but “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me.” And it was their life of love that was to be the evidence that they belonged to Him.

But just for this reason, Christians ought to seek to be *visibly* as well as vitally united. The charm of Rome for many is that she stands for one great visible Church. Such a Church, without the domination of the Spirit, has proved a dangerous thing in the world—a tyranny and oppression. But, given the right Spirit and a direct relation to Christ, the ideal is a true one. The divisions and separations amongst the Protestant churches may have originated in natural and, for the time being, inevitable ways. Some individual churches may draw strength from them. They have also saved us from the domination of an unspiritual organisation—and it is only a spiritually permeated Church that can realise the ideal of the united Church. But these divisions cause a weakening of the Church

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of Christ as a whole in her relation to Christ on the one hand, and to the world on the other ; they fail to realise His ideal. If all Christians “ holding fast the Head,” which is Christ alone, formed but one visible body, with freedom in its individual members—whether we think of persons or of churches—to believe and to serve Christ as the Spirit leads them, with, it might be, varying creeds and forms of government, but really and openly united in the bonds of love and service, as the organ of the One Spirit, it would impress and move the world in a way that a divided Church can never do. There is also much *work* to be done by the Church in and for the world that only such a united Church can effect.

Meanwhile, *the truest Church* is that which can serve Christ most effectually, wherein His Spirit dwells most fully, and through which He is able to express Himself and work most efficiently. As *the Body of Christ* the Church has a very high mission committed to it. Christ *needs* a Body by means of which to manifest Himself, and continue His work in the world. He can no more act in the world apart from a body than we could act were we spirits without bodies. One of the greatest mistakes we make is looking to and praying to God or to Christ to do what He is far more anxious to do than we are, but which He can only accomplish through us. Many prayers are unanswered because we will not make the answer possible. It is not God’s will to leave

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the world unevangelised or His children to live in sin and misery or under oppression ; far, very far from it. The idea of the Church is that of one body with many different members, animated and filled with that Spirit of Christ which is the Spirit of God, each member fulfilling some function in the service of God and man. Does the Church as a whole rise to this conception ? Does she really make Christ manifest in the world to-day, and is His work being done as He who sacrificed Himself for its sake seeks to accomplish it ? We have here an example of an imperfectly realised truth for the want of that earnest " thinking " to which the Apostle exhorts. *What is the Church's mission as " the Body of Christ ? "* It is the same as that which inspired Christ when here upon earth, and the power of which in its fulness He sent forth through His Cross. It is to proclaim the Gospel of God, the Heavenly Father of men, so that His children may be gathered home to Him. It is not only to preach it in words, but to show it to be a living reality in those who profess to believe it. The Church bases herself on the Fatherhood of God ; but is it taken in earnest ? Do her members really believe that each human being is a child of the Heavenly Father, loved and yearned over by Him, and does she go forth as Jesus went, in the power of His Spirit, to gather all in to the Divine arms that long to enfold them ? There is much noble and self-sacrificing effort made in mission fields abroad,

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not without fruit, although we constantly hear complaints of the slowness of the churches to provide the necessary means. But does the Church "think" earnestly enough on the best means of bringing those of other religions to the Christian Faith? And there is a great mission field at home, too much neglected. Multitudes are left to struggle for life under conditions such as their Heavenly Father never meant them to be under. Thousands also are drifting away from our churches and from all religion. Within the churches themselves many are harassed by doubts respecting vital Christianity as it is presented to them. God and Christ are still too often hedged round with dogmas and articles of belief which really hide them in their truth from many of our generation. The Heavenly Father is too often represented in such a way as to repel rather than draw to Him those whom He is so anxious to receive if they would only come. The Gospel of His love as it comes through Christ and His Cross has been obscured by conceptions belonging to legality and sovereignty instead of those flowing from Fatherhood. While we are zealous for the conversion of the heathen, why should the Church stand by, to all appearance unable to stem the current that is carrying so many away from her at home? When we think of the drift away from the churches, the question cannot but arise, how far the churches themselves are answerable for it? If man is created for God, and if the

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Gospel committed to the Church be that by which the Father meant to win His children to Himself, it is surely a most pressing question why there is so little response given to the Divine call. All are equally dear to our Heavenly Father's heart—not the submerged tenth only, but also the ever-increasing number of educated people in comfortable circumstances who have felt the influences of modern thought, into harmony with which the Church has failed to bring her creeds. Christians are but a handful in the world as yet. What, if while they are increasing at the circumference, there is decay at the centre? The Church as a whole needs to "think" more seriously on her relation to Christ as His Body, and to set herself more earnestly to be the organ and representative of the unchanging Christ to men and women in the world amidst the changing conditions of thought and life of the present.

When those composing the various churches come to "think" more earnestly on these matters, they will become willing to sink their differences to their true subordinate position in order that they may more truly serve Him whose they are, and to serve whom they exist. There will then be but one great visible Church in the whole world, filled with the Spirit and power of Christ, by means of which Christ Himself shall come again in His completed "second Coming" in the fulness of "the power and glory of His Father." Christ longs for such a Church, for such a Body. He is

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straitened for want of it. He cannot do all that He seeks to do till He finds it. And nothing keeps Him from having it but the way in which we prefer to uphold our own opinions (whether sound or not) instead of subordinating everything to the service of His Spirit. We need both to pray and to work till before God and in the sight of men the words of the hymn, often sung in our churches, are actually true: "We are not divided, all one body we." As it is, they are apt to excite ridicule. We may rightly and earnestly pray if at the same time we remember that it rests with ourselves to bring the answer:

Head of the Church beneath,
The Catholic, the true,
On all her members breathe,
Her broken frame renew;
Then shall Thy perfect will be done,
When Christians love and live as one.

CHAPTER VII

THE TRUE WORSHIP

“Render unto God the glory due unto His name.”

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth ; for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers.”

“We worship God in the Spirit.”

WORSHIP is the natural expression of the religious sentiment. It is therefore to be witnessed wherever religion exists—practically, wherever man is found. The instinct to worship is a testimony to the fact that there is something in man akin to God, something of God which seeks God and turns to Him for its fulfilment, as “fire ascending seeks the sun” and “rivers to the ocean run.”

But its character necessarily varies with the conception that is held of the nature of the Object of worship. It has a development and a history corresponding to that of religion itself. Hence it has found, and still finds, expression in an immense variety of forms. Places have been consecrated, altars reared, sacrifices offered, rites (sometimes grossly immoral and barbarous) have been instituted and observed which have debased instead of elevating the worshippers. In nothing do we witness more sadly revealed the slowness

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of man to learn, and the strong hold that custom has upon him, than in his religious ceremonies. All worship, therefore, is not equally true, and we recognise this fact by sending missionaries to the heathen to teach them a truer knowledge of God and a worthier worship of Him. But, *What of our own worship?* Does it meet the Christian ideal of true worship? As spirituality has deepened the forms of worship have become fewer and simpler. To-day, among ourselves, we have, not only the more elaborate and imposing ritual of Cathedrals, but also our Churches and Meetings with their simple services of praise and prayer and admonition resting on words of Divine inspiration. Our churches have been often in the past crowded with worshippers, and still in large numbers they come to them. But many are forsaking them, refusing or not caring to join in our worship. There are various reasons for this; much of the current neglect of worship may arise from pure indifference. But why should there be such indifference in a land that is crowded with churches? Ought we not more seriously to ask ourselves, *What is the true worship of God as Christ has taught it?* If we would be clear of responsibility for the growing neglect of worship, if we wish to gain the people for the God we believe in and His service, if we would really render to God the worship that He seeks, and the "glory due to His name," we must be clear on this great question; we must "think" more on what the

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true worship of the true God is than we are in the habit of doing.

The true worship, must, of course, be that of the true God, of God in His truth as He has made Himself known to us. And it must be true in the sense that it is that which God seeks and is pleased to receive. Worship really means *worthship*—the rendering to God of that which He is worthy to receive, that which answers to the conception of the true God. The Psalmist felt this when he said, “Render unto God the glory due unto His name”; but the Psalmist did not possess the full knowledge of God in His truth. There is much that is very beautiful, true and helpful in the Psalms, but they certainly stop short of the full knowledge of God; they belong to a pre-Christian worship, and the place which they have held, *as a whole*, in Christian churches is an indication of how slow even Christians have been to rise to the Christian conception of God and His true worship.

It was in Christ that God was revealed, and in His conversation with the Samaritan woman He states both what the true God is and what is His true worship.

(1) If we are to think truly of God, so as to worship Him truly, Jesus taught, we must think of Him as “*the Father*.” This was Christ’s name for God, and God’s revelation of Himself in Christ. It is just because God is our Father that the instinct to worship rises within us. The Jews

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and Samaritans worshipped God chiefly as Jehovah the stern, yet merciful Sovereign and Lawgiver. But Jesus taught us a nearer and dearer and more inspiring name for God. The true worshippers should worship *the Father*; not the Jehovah of Jews and Samaritans any more than the Zeus of the Greeks or the Jupiter of the Romans; but *the Father*. If then we would truly worship God we must think of Him and feel toward Him as "our Father." The spirit of the true worshipper must be the filial spirit; he must draw nigh to God like a child coming to a great, all-wise and all-good Father. This is the first thing: "the true worshippers are they who worship the Father." We never truly worship God save as we cherish this filial spirit. It is into this relationship to God that Christ seeks to bring men.

But there is an important corollary too often forgotten; God is the *universal* Father, my brother's Father, my sister's Father, as truly as He is mine. We cannot appropriate God selfishly to ourselves. If we truly worship *the Father*, we must regard ourselves as the members of one great family all owning the same Heavenly Father, with whom, as St. Peter says, "there is no respect of persons." The filial spirit is necessarily also the brotherly spirit, the sisterly spirit. This is just what any true father would seek to behold. Without it he could not be satisfied. To see a child here and there claiming the filial relation-

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ship, yet acting unjustly or unkindly towards, or altogether ignoring, his brothers and sisters in the world, cannot be pleasing to the great God and Father of us all. "If thou art offering thy gift at the altar," said Jesus, "and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." It is to be feared that much of our popular worship is vitiated by non-observance of this requirement, and by the want of that family feeling, which the great all-Father desires to see on the part of His worshippers. No doubt the absence of it, with the sense of coldness, isolation and unreality in our worshipping assemblies, is among the reasons why many are forsaking our churches.

(2) The second thing that Jesus said about God and His true worship was that *God is Spirit*, and therefore to be worshipped *in spirit and truth*. In answer to the question whether Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem was the place where God should be worshipped, Jesus replied that the hour had come when in neither place alone would the true God be worshipped, but in every place His true worshippers should worship Him in spirit and truth.

This was directly said, be it noted, in opposition to the idea that God dwelt in certain places, and was to be worshipped by certain rites and ceremonies, such as was the Samaritan worship

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on Mount Gerizim, and the Jewish on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. The reason is that God is *Spirit*, everywhere present and at all times the same. You cannot localise Spirit. God is the infinite, omnipresent Spirit—from whose Presence we are never absent. The deeper minds amongst the Jewish people had felt this before Christ came : “ Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what manner of house will ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest—but to this man will I look, even to him that is of a poor and contrite spirit and that trembleth at my word.” “ Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ? or whither shall I flee from thy Presence ? ” In the teaching of Christ we have the culmination of this movement towards spirituality in the conception of God and His worship; it is one of the most distinctive things in Christianity. One of the chief causes of offence on the part of Christ was His saying about the possible destruction of the temple at Jerusalem. It is evident that this had rankled in the minds of some who heard Him, for it was the one thing they brought up against Him at the last. Nothing could be more irreligious ; it was even blasphemous. So also, when His disciples went forth preaching a more spiritual worship, this was what so greatly enraged their Jewish opponents. It was when Stephen declared, “ Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands,” and quoted the words of the prophet above given,

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telling them how they had always persecuted their spiritual teachers, that they “gnashed on him with their teeth,” and ultimately stoned him to death. Paul preached the same truth at Athens, declaring that the true God is “not far from each one of us.” “*You* are the temples of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you” was the great truth he kept before his converts. As Augustine wrote at a later time: “We had gone out of doors: we are sent within—go entirely within—and if, perchance, you seek some lofty place, some holy place, show yourself *within* a temple for God. For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” This great, fundamental Christian truth is one which many present-day worshippers fail to realise; it is one that is not sufficiently impressed upon them by those who conduct the worship of God as it is offered in sacred *places*.

(3) If God cannot be truly worshipped in certain places only, as little can He be so at certain *times* and *seasons* merely—on Sabbaths and holy days. Paul teaches repeatedly that the enlightened Christian had been carried beyond these Jewish and Pagan conceptions: “Let no man judge you” in these respects, he says. Just as it is not in some *places* only that God is present with us, so it is not at certain *times* merely that we are near Him. At all times and in all places God is with us; yea, within us. “In Him we live and move and have our being,” although it may be only at some times that we realise His presence.

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(4) Again, the worship of God in spirit and truth means that God cannot be adequately worshipped by the rites and ceremonies, or the "order of worship," which we employ in our church services. It is not implied that such worship is wrong or unacceptable to God. If His presence is not *confined* to sacred places, no more is it excluded from them. When people come before Him with the express desire of withdrawing from the outward world and of realising His presence, concentrating their thoughts on the things Divine and eternal, it is likely to be well-pleasing to God and helpful to themselves. The soul will ever seek some means of expressing its feelings toward God and of having these feelings deepened, purified and rightly directed. After Jewish forms were left behind, and even before they were so, the Christians were impelled to meet together in order to give vent to their feelings of love and devotion, to supplicate the Divine aid and blessing, to learn the things that belong to the Christian life, and to express and cement their union as brethren in the Lord. Their united worship was very simple in its forms, but it was very natural and necessary. The Lord's Supper and the Agapae, with the contributions in kind which they brought for those who had need, gave expression to their union in the one great family of God and of their practical regard and care for one another. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," said the Apostle. These assemblies

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gave expression to the family relationship in ways that have become impracticable for us, but for which some substitute needs to be found. How cold and formal our worshipping assemblies seem compared with those which were the outcome of the freshness of the Christian Spirit of Love. How little real care do members of churches show for one another! Such meetings "in the Spirit" also consecrated for them the first day of the week—the day of Resurrection—as "the Lord's Day." In these gatherings they found united access to God in the one Spirit, instruction, uplifting, inspiration. Where two or three were gathered together in the name of Christ, He Himself was in their midst.

United public worship is necessary, not only because of the individual's need of expressing his devotion, etc., but because before God, while we are recognised and cared for individually, we are members of one great family, which fact should be thus recognised and proclaimed to the world. For this reason a man cannot adequately worship God alone or in isolation from his brethren. For all these (and other) reasons, it is necessary to maintain our united public worship. It cannot be made too impressive and uplifting, and it ought to be such as in some way to give expression to the Christian idea of fellowship or brotherhood. Without this it wants an important and attractive element that was markedly present in the assemblies of the first Christians.

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But the true worship is *primarily* that of the individual in the depths of his own spirit, and in the presence of God alone. Jesus gave no directions for public worship, but He did say, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and, having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee." Because *God* is Spirit, His true worship must be that of the *spirit within*. It is the spirit of man responding to, becoming at one with, the inspiring Spirit of God. As that is the Spirit of our entire life, our devotion cannot possibly find adequate expression in our united public worship merely, however sincere that may be and however worthy its form. The worship of God in spirit and truth must rise up before Him, not alone at certain times and in sacred places, nor in the secret chamber only, but at all times and in all places in the devotion of the whole life. The *spirit* is that which is deepest in man, which moves and gives character to the man, animating all his conduct. If the spirit of a man is devoted to God, the whole man will belong to Him, and, although he may worship with others at certain times and in certain places and with certain set forms of "service," the real sanctuary is *within*, He knows that God's true worship is an unceasing devotion to His Spirit—a worship which makes

Our common, daily life divine,
And every land a Palestine.

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He understands the apostolic injunction : “ Whether ye eat or drink, or *whatsoever* ye do, do all to the glory of God.” It is not a burden to him this, but the natural expression of his life as a son of God. It is the true “ simple life,” in all things devoted to God and His will. As Fénelon says : “ They who possess this piety are much like others ; they are without affectation, without austerity ; they are social and easy, but still live in perpetual subjection to all their duties, and in unceasing renunciation of everything that does not in some way belong to the Divine order, which always governs. In short, they live in the pure vision of God, sacrificing to Him every irregular movement of nature. This is the adoration in spirit and truth that Jesus taught. All the rest is the mere ceremony of religion ; the shadow rather than the substance of Christianity.”

We have too greatly forgotten that such devoted spirit and life is the true *worship* of God as Christ has revealed God and as God has visited us in His love in Christ. We have not yet, in many cases at least, sufficiently escaped from the old ways of worship into the liberty of the Spirit. The impression unfortunately widely prevails that our worship in Churches, Cathedrals, and Religious Assemblies is the true worship. Men and women still speak of going to Church “ to worship God,” of “ the worship ” as commencing at such and such an hour, and as being over at

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a certain hour. A good friend, wishing to get people somewhat beyond this, (was he not the treasurer of a church?) used to lay it down that "the worship" began at the plate at the church door. It must begin long before that, and it must not end when we leave the church. Having joined in the Church services, many seem to think that they are done with "worship." With such thoughts, we have never worshipped God truly at all. Surely God does not dwell in temples made with hands; we do not bring God with us to the church, nor leave Him behind us there. Is the worship we offer there—however worthy it may be in its place—all that God is *worthy* to receive, all that He seeks, or that which will satisfy the Great Father-heart? Is our "service," as we call it, of much *real* service to God? It is well that we should make our united public worship as devout and as imposing as is possible. We cannot offer anything too great to God. But after all, what is it at its highest and best to the Almighty? God is not like a great man that loves to hear his praises sounded; such a man would not be really great. What He seeks is His children's love, and useful service in His world. It is for this He is waiting and longing; it is to this that He is moving us, and, surely, this is what He is worthy to receive. The highest use of our public worship is to inspire us to this constant devotion and service, and to guide and direct us therein. It

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must “grieve” God to listen to so much verbal adoration, and yet receive so little practical devotion and service in our lives; to hear so many prayers, often entreating Him to do what He is looking to ourselves to effect; to witness such an expenditure of means on external buildings and formal worship while yet so large a part of the world is left to sit in heathen darkness, our poor brethren at home to struggle in vain for a decent livelihood, and so much that is evil in His world still unremoved. Surely the words of the olden prophet are still appropriate: “Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?” Or perhaps we ought rather to quote our Lord’s words, “These ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone.” The idea that the true worship of God is that offered in cathedrals and churches has done much to retard religion and to drive men away from our churches. We need to “think” more deeply on the truth that the God who is Spirit can be no longer worshipped truly in “temples made with hands,” but only “in spirit and truth” in that temple of the human soul which He has built for Himself, in which He condescends to dwell, not merely to visit at certain times. We need to ponder more deeply the fact that all man-built temples have been rejected for this inner temple of the soul. As already remarked, this is really one of the most elementary and fundamental of Christian truths. Its realisation will not lessen, but will deepen,

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our interest in the “assembling of ourselves together,” and will greatly increase its value and influence.

The true worship of the God who is Spirit is the blending of our finite spirits with that Infinite Spirit that God is. It is like the opening of the sluice to the inflow of the Divine, living and life-giving water, that all the powers of our being may be moved thereby. God is Spirit and man is spirit, and God is only truly worshipped when man's spirit becomes the dwelling-place, channel or vehicle of the Divine Spirit. We know the character of that Spirit which seeks to possess and to act by means of us: “God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” To live in holy Love, to walk in love as Christ also loved us, to be the channels through which our Father's love flows forth in His world, the instruments of His working, the mediums of His manifestation, the doers of His Will regardless of self, His devoted children, true brothers and sisters to the rest wherever they are found, is the true worship of that God who is Spirit. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,” St. Paul urges, “to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing to God, which is your rational (or spiritual) religious service” (*λατρεία*, “worship,” as given in the margin of the R.V.). And James, using a different word (*θρησκεία*), says: “The religious service which is pure and stainless

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in the sight of our God and Father is to visit fatherless children and widowed women in their time of trouble, and to keep one's own self unspotted from the world" (Weymouth's translation). As our modern poets have expressed it :

For he whom Jesus loved has truly spoken :
The holier worship which He deigns to bless
Restores the lost and binds the spirit-broken,
And feeds the widow and the fatherless.

O brother man ! fold to thy heart thy brother ;
Where pity dwells, the peace of God is there ;
To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

Jesus added : " For the Father *seeketh* such to be His worshippers." Just because He *is* the Father. What can satisfy any true father or mother's heart but the love and devotion, the unity and harmony, of their children ? No other " service " can satisfy the heart of our Heavenly Father. Besides, He is Himself invisible ; He is purely *Spirit*. But He has given our spirits embodiment so that by His Spirit entering and possessing us we can manifest Him and do His desired work in the world. Why God's will is not more perfectly done on earth and Himself made more manifest to men, is because He finds so few true " worshippers." So many are content to offer that which costs them little and which comes to little—merely the worship in our churches

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on certain days. Our Father can never be satisfied with that. Nor can our brethren. The heart yearns for a sympathy and fellowship not only with God but with man ; but alas ! too often in our churches it is not to be found.

The Father seeks such worshippers for the satisfaction of His fatherly heart, for His self-manifestation, and the accomplishment of His purpose in the world. In countless ways He is seeking them—in *everything* indeed. In the natures He has gifted us with, and in the whole experience of life ; in the beauty which shines upon us from His works ; in the blessings He showers upon us, He is seeking to raise our hearts to Himself. In the adverse and painful things that happen to us ; in disappointment and sorrow, in death itself, He is seeking to make us dissatisfied with the world that would otherwise hold our affections—with all that is lower than Himself. In the joy of goodness and the misery and pain of evil ; in the loneliness we often feel and our unsatisfied longings, in the heart's craving for a greater love than man or woman can give, in all those nameless stirrings of the soul within, and aspirations that would soar above the passing world—in all these ways, and in many more, God is seeking us :

Man cannot be God's outlaw if he would,
Nor so abscond him in the caves of sense
But Nature still shall search some crevice out
With messages of splendour from that Source
Which, dive he, soar he, baffles still and lures.

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He is seeking us by the very love which gives us being. His love is the sole motive of the creation. The infinite reason does not act blindly or without a motive, and what can His motive be but a love that flows forth from His perfect life, seeking to impart itself to us as His children? "Love is the seed of Creation," which the great Father is constantly sowing, so that worlds innumerable arise to be peopled by His children. For this, suns shine and planets revolve around them. For this, the solid earth has taken shape, and life has appeared on its surface. For this, life has been led onward through all that long process that at length yielded *man*. For this, the Divine education of humanity has proceeded, and to *man* God looks with unutterable longing that he may freely become His own dear child, the devoted organ of His love and the sharer in His blessed Life. For this—that we might know and believe in that seeking love, that we might see and feel and respond to it—He drew ever nearer and nearer to us, till in the fulness of the time He appeared in human flesh in Jesus Christ. We know how the Divine seeking love declared itself in Him—like the Shepherd who left the ninety and nine that were safe to go after the one sheep that was lost, yea, like the Good Shepherd that gave His life for the sheep. Not merely waiting, like the father of the prodigal, ready and longing to receive his wandering child when he would return, but going forth after us,

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to find us by the great sacrifice of the Cross. And by His Spirit in our hearts, above all as it proceeds from that manifestation of His love and forgiveness, by its gentle and gracious whispers within our own souls, He is seeking us to be His true worshippers. Nothing is more needed to-day than to realise what the true Christian worship of God is and to see how in everything He is seeking those who will render it.

Some say that they are seeking *God*, that they have been for long seeking Him but cannot find Him. This may be very true, but what such have to do is to turn the matter the other way. We should never dream of seeking God, or think of God at all, unless He first thought of us and was seeking us. The desire for God comes from God. It is the expression of something of God already within you ; it is the touch of His Spirit on your spirit, seeking you for Himself. Say no more that you are seeking God, but be sure that God is seeking you, that He needs you, that His great Father-heart yearns over you, longs for you—be sure of this, and let Him find you.

Each " Lord appear " thy lips pronounce
Contains My " Here am I " ;
A special messenger I send,
Veiled in thy every sigh ;
Thy love is but a girdle
Of the love I bear to thee ;
And, sleeping in thy " Come O Lord ! "
There lies, " Here son ! " from Me.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRUE LIFE

“I am come that ye may have Life, and may have it abundantly.”

“I am the living bread which came down out of heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.”

“The life that is life indeed.”

No attempt to define life has been successful. We may describe its characteristics; but it seems impossible to say definitely what it is. It is a power; yet, before it can be such, it is a result, a consequence before it can become a cause. The *seed*, for example, is not actually alive; it has only a capacity for life under certain circumstances. Let these conditions be absent and no life will appear; in time the very capacity for life will go. We may regard life as a higher manifestation of the one Divine Power, that shows itself in lower forms in inanimate nature. It is not a *thing* in the material sense, but a *spiritual* reality. But, whatever we may say about it, it is certainly as it comes to us, that which makes it possible for any of us to be anything at all. On the other hand, *what* we shall become as living beings depends largely on ourselves. Life is both a possession and a possibility—our most

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valuable possession, our greatest possibility. We receive life, but we also go on to make it. What we may become is limited by the idea of the human, but that idea itself may turn out to be unlimited, capable of indefinite, if not infinite, expansion. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be." No question can be of greater importance than What is the true Life, according to the Divine ideal, as far as we can know it, and, How can we find it? For it is only by knowing this and seeking to realise it in our experience that the Divine possibilities of our life can be fulfilled.

May we not say with assurance that the Divine ideal of our life is seen in *the highest that we know, and that is open to us?* Life as we see it is manifested in a succession of rising grades. Lowest, there is the vegetable world or plant life, with no volition or consciousness, tied down by invariable laws. Higher, we witness in the animal world the rise of life from the physical to the psychical; in even the lowest forms of animal life there would seem to be some dawning consciousness and volition. In man, the inner, psychical life shows itself superior to the physical. It is lighted by reason, capable of deliberate choice and self-direction, able to discern the moral ideal, and it is the seat of spiritual aspirations. Man is a self-conscious *Personality* with the power of self-formation. Life is given us, a fresh supply comes to us day by day, given into our hand, as it were, and in a large measure we can shape it as we choose—make it

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larger and fuller, keep it much the same, or let it dwindle away almost into nothingness. How we shall shape our lives will depend for the most part on what we deem the true good. Each man's life is governed by that which seems to him, from moment to moment, most desirable for him to attain to and enjoy. We may not deliberately think about it, yet there is always some end which we seek to gain. The greatness of man and his responsibility lie in the fact that he is capable of determining *what* his end in life shall be. He is thus, so far, his own creator and the "master of his fate." He may remain largely on the level of the merely vegetative life, dominated unconsciously by moods and circumstances. Except when self-interest becomes so keen as to strongly assert itself, he may be entirely a slave to what is outside himself. This cannot be the true life of man. Or he may suffer himself to be swayed in the main by the appetites, and passions and necessities of his physical or animal nature, thus also failing to rise to manhood. Or, rising out of this, the character of the life may become predominantly *intellectual*. The things that interest and inform the mind may sway him; he may have his mental faculties so quickened and enlarged that a great store of intellectual life becomes his possession. He may become an earnest student, a famous savant and useful dispenser of knowledge in the world. This is by no means an unworthy use of life; yet it is

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not the highest. Man is more than intellect. Such a man may not be merely

A self-sufficient reasoning thing,
An intellectual all in all,

a *man* can scarcely be that, if he is a man at all; the emotional and moral elements in his nature are bound in some measure to come into play. Still, the dominant element in the life may be the intellectual. Or it may be the emotions. Feeling, awakened by intelligent and sympathetic perception of nature and man, heightened by a power of imagination, may dominate the life. The man may become a poet, an artist, a creator in some measure, and thus add to the interest and enjoyment of the world. Yet he may stop far short of the highest manhood and the true life.

The *moral* life is higher than the merely intellectual and emotional. "The honest man"—honest all over—"is king o' men for a' that," in spite of all that shines more brightly or that towers above him. The man who can conquer and command himself in loyalty to the visions of justice and duty which shine upon him, who dares to do right though the heavens should fall, who will act honestly whatever the consequences to himself, who seeks always to do justly in relation to himself and his fellows, to respect them as persons equally with himself—whatever their outward position may be—and to serve and help them in whatever way he can, has risen, every man in his inmost self feels and knows, to a far

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higher conception of life than that which is governed by intellect and emotion merely. He has got, in some measure at least, beyond himself into the larger life of his fellows. The simple fact that he has done so proves that he has reached a higher and truer, richer and fuller life.

Yet this moral life may not be the highest, although it is inseparable from it. However perfect in itself, it may still have its limitations. It may be bounded by time and limited to earth. While it has a due regard for others as having equal rights and mutual duties, it may fail to recognise a Will above us all, with which we are meant to be in harmony—which, indeed, seeks to operate through us. It may fail to rise to the Infinite, to expand into the Universal, to ally itself with the Divine, to become as far as possible one with God. To be alive to the world around us and our fellow men therein, but dead to the Eternal Source of being, to whom we owe our all, is surely to come far short of the true *life*. The Spirit of Life that moves within us and seeks expression through us makes us feel and know that there is a still higher, wider, truer life open to us, inviting us, into which we ought to rise. It is in the life of *Religion*, as Jesus Christ set it before us and called us to it, and as God by His Spirit in our heart moves us thereto, that we find the highest and truest life of man. For such Religion believes that man is conceived in the image of God Himself, created and called to be His son and

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heir. The ideal of life which Christ realised in His own Person and calls us to does not stop short of the Infinite ; it is likeness to God Himself in spirit and character. Its ideal of Duty has no limit : “ Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect.” Never can we rest satisfied because “ we have done our duty.” “ After ye have done all these things, say, We are unprofitable servants, for we have *only* done that which it was our duty to do.” There is always something above and beyond to aspire to. It is as when we have climbed some high mountain’s summit and gaze on the far horizon which appears to limit the scene—the sky seeming, perhaps, to descend on farther mountain tops. But when we have travelled to and scaled these also, a new scene opens out before our vision—the horizon is as far off as ever it was. The Love that shines before us is a universal, yea, an infinite love. It goes forth, not to friends merely, but to enemies, hating none, loving all, grudging nothing, freely giving itself, rising up to God. This is the life of God in man, the Universal, Infinite Life made in some real measure ours. As such it is “ life indeed,” life in its highest truth and in its eternal reality.

For the true life *must* be eternal. All that is true is such, and if our personal life be really one with truth, it can never cease to be. Here in the body, in whatever degree we possess that life, it must come to an end as far as its continued expression through these bodies of flesh and blood

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is concerned. But there is something in that life that has never found expression, and that cannot find expression, in and through these bodies. There is something in its depths, not of man merely, but of God, something, not finite only but infinite, not merely temporal but eternal. This is why the true life that Christ called men to is always described as "eternal life." It is life above and beyond time and sense. It is eternal because it is nothing less than the life of God in us. Even in this world its influence does not cease. The power of Christ's life in the world to-day is mightier than ever it was whilst He was here in the flesh, and into His life the influences of the lives of all who have shared in the Divine life have entered; with it they have become identified; they are a constant element in the life of Christ as it tells on us to-day. And as that life was the deepest thing in them, with which they were at one, the very *spirit* of their life and the formative centre of their personality, that personality endures and lives with Christ in God. How it finds continued personal expression we do not know. But we can be certain that those personalities in whom the true life has become their life, in whom the Divine life itself is central, can never perish, but are eternal as God is eternal.

That this is the true life appears from the fact that it is the only life—the only thing on earth—of which *eternity* can be predicated. Man's life

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on the earth must come to an end as truly as that of the animals around him. This fair earth itself must be dissolved, or become unfit for the abode of living creatures. The glorious sun that warms our globe and sustains the life that is on it must some time cease to pour forth light and heat. Humanity on the earth must cease to be. All interests into which the Divine and eternal do not enter must be left behind! "The world passeth away and the desire thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." This is the sure ground of immortality; God cannot die, and God's true life in some measure lives in me.

It was this Divine and eternal life which, in its truth and fulness for men, was centred in Jesus Christ. He is "the Bread of God which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life to the world." Of course, we are not to take "coming down from heaven" in an outward and literal sense, any more than we can so take the "bread" or the "flesh" of Christ. There is no up or down in the universe. We naturally think of heaven as exalted, but that does not imply that it is "up," above clouds and stars.

In this connection we meet again the question of *the one Christ*. Why, it is asked, should this life be centred in this one Person? Why should Jesus Christ stand before the world as its source? Be it noted, in the first place, that Jesus is nowhere represented as the *sole* Possessor of that life;

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only of it in its fulness. Secondly, that its possession in its fulness must be a gradual acquisition by humanity. There was a time when *man* first emerged from the lower animal life in possession of the full human life, and, possibly, that life was centred in one person or family. So there was a time when man first entered on the fulness of the higher, spiritual life of sonship to God, and it was this that was first realised in all its completeness in Jesus Christ. It *had* to be realised in some Personality who should be a centre of its fulness to others. As we have seen, all life is something that we *receive*. As it comes to us, even in its lower forms, it is the *result* of the previous working of the Divine Power in the world. And that life in its highest form, as the result of all God's working in *man*, comes to us in its fullest measure—truly from God and from Heaven—in Jesus Christ. All God's gifts to men are mediated through outstanding personalities. Thirdly, it is the same thing as the complete incarnation of God in Christ. It was the Divine *Life* that was so incarnated; as St. John says: "that eternal life which was with the Father was manifested unto us." Not merely that He should have this life in Himself, but that He should impart it to others, was the purpose of the complete incarnation of God in Christ which was consummated by that sacrifice of the Cross, in which He "gave His flesh for the life of the world." There the love that is the life of God poured

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itself out for us and unto us that it might become our life also. Apart from such Divine manifestation, how could that life ever have been known to men? It is there, and *there alone*, that we actually *see* the ideal, and at the same time receive the inspiration and the power that can make it real in ourselves.

Christ gives this life to others by imparting Himself to them in His spiritual truth. He does it, not by His teaching merely, but also by the sacrifice which He makes on our behalf. The life is found by our responding to Christ, receiving Him to be our life. As He said, or is truly represented as saying, "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you"—that is, no true and eternal life. This He spake of His *Spirit*: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life." There is no mystery about it. It is as simple as the eating of bread by a hungry man. Yet the bread is not a simple thing; to its existence and power of sustaining life countless forces have contributed. When we eat bread it is not hard material particles that go to replenish energy and sustain life. The invisible forces that have this effect are concentrated in the bread in such a way that they can easily enter into and become parts of our physical being. So, in Jesus Christ, in that bodily form which made the Divine life manifest, were concentrated those Divine spiritual

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forces that can impart, sustain and perfect the true spiritual and eternal life. As already said, life only appears under certain conditions. But there is always a latent capacity for it, else it could not appear at all. So in man there is the capacity for this life of God which the Spirit comes in many ways to quicken into actual vitality. But the Spirit finds its fullest and most potent means of operation through Jesus Christ and His Gospel of God. Hence it is so often and so truly said that believing on Him, receiving Him, is the source of eternal life. "Eating Christ" is simply *receiving* Christ as the Source and Sustenance and Perfecter of that life which showed itself in its fulness in Him, and which in us is the "life indeed." And to this end He offers Himself to all "without money and without price." All that is wanted is to receive Him. This is the great Gospel-message; Christ in His own Person represents man, made, in spite of his sin, at one with God: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." Coming in our spirits to Christ, receiving Him as He presents Himself to us, really "believing" in Him, we find the true life quickened, or, it may be, intensified in us. The power of the life of God in man is centred in Him for the whole world, and His sad reproach is still: "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."

In connection with this life in and through Christ there are some attendant things on which we should do well seriously to "think."

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(1) We know that this life was not confined to Christ ; others before He came possessed some measure of it. Is not the same true to-day, apart from Christ ? Do we not tend to create a wrong impression of Christianity when we speak as if Christ was the sole source of the spiritual life to men, and fail to recognise it in some measure in others who may not have heard of Him, or who, perhaps because of some misunderstanding, do not believe in Him in the full Christian sense of believing ? Was it not the life of God in man that was centred in Christ—a life which has certain well marked characteristics and may in some real measure live even in unbelievers ? The life is always greater and deeper than the creed, and what is offered to men in Christ is that life in the fulness of its truth and power. In its essence it is the life of love. As St. John says, where love dwells God dwells, and where love is not, God is not. If we would test ourselves by this standard it might broaden our outlook and teach us charity.

(2) Is there not a large amount of man's spiritual life commonly left outside Christian consideration, as if it were a thing apart from religion. The Christian life is too much regarded as something quite distinct and separate from the other expressions of human faculty. This is a matter rightly urged by Eucken in his writings, and it deserves the serious attention of Christians. As the life of God in man—the life represented in Christ

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and proceeding from Him to the world—ought to be the deepest influence and the dominating power in the entire life of men, giving direction and character to what we term the secular life and its manifestations as well as to that which we mark off as religious—“bringing every thought” as Paul puts it, “into captivity to the knowledge of the truth.” As the whole lower life in the world contributes to the human, so should the physical and entire psychical life of man contribute to the spiritual. Ideally, that was first, although last in appearance. It is life in its truth and therefore should embrace all lower manifestations without exception.

(3) Finally let it be well noted that the life that appears in Christ is not only something *offered* to men, but that which has a supreme *moral claim* upon all men. Christianity is not primarily a creed or a set of beliefs which we are asked to receive, but a Divine moral and spiritual appeal to which we give or withhold our assent, whatever we may believe or fail to believe. It is a *Life* that claims us. Intellectual difficulties need not keep any one from being a Christian in the deepest sense of being a partaker of the life that is in Christ. Jesus Christ is the one true Lord of men because in Him the true life of man lived, the truth of God for man was incarnate. We make a mistake when we first plead with men to be “saved.” The first thing is the imperative moral appeal of *the true life* in Christ, which

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rightfully claims us whether we want to be "saved" or not. Response to that life *is* salvation. Christ stands right before us as we go on our way; we cannot get past Him without either receiving or rejecting the life to which He calls us; no valid excuse can be urged for non-compliance. The appeal is direct to the soul, and it is the man within who must give the answer, quite apart from all that is external.

I have a life with Christ to live,
But, ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can clear answer give
Of this and that book's date?
I have a life in Christ to live,
I have a death in Christ to die;
And must I wait till science give
All doubts a full reply?

Nay rather, while the sea of doubt
Is raging wildly round about,
Questioning of life and death and sin,
Let me but creep within
Thy fold, O Christ, and at Thy feet
Take but the lowest seat,
And hear Thine awful voice repeat
In gentlest accents, heavenly sweet,
Come unto Me and rest:
Believe Me, and be blest.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRUE MAN

“We are true men.”

“Moreover, thou shalt provide over all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth.”

“To walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul.”

“The new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.”

“The inward man—I myself.”

WE may speak of “the true man” in more senses than one.

(1) We may think of him as being that which the sons of Jacob affirmed themselves to be to their brother Joseph when he pretended to deem them spies: “We are true men, and no spies.” The true man in this sense is the genuine man, the honest, truthful, trusty, straight-forward man, the man without deception or guile, who means what he says, and says what he means, who really is what he seems to be. He seeks to be true, not only in the sight of men, but before God who knows the heart. He does not pretend to what he does not feel, say what he does not believe, or promise what he does not perform. Whatever he takes in hand, that he is faithful to. It was such men that Moses was directed to set over the

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Israelites to be rulers and judges “able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain.” Such the Lord also desired David’s children to be : “If they take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne of Israel.” It is under such men that peoples prosper, that justice is done to all, and that dynasties are made secure, whether they be those of kingdoms or of commonwealths. We need such men. If we may adapt the familiar lines, we may well earnestly pray,

God give us men ! A time like this demands
Strong minds, great hearts, true faith and ready hands ;
Men whom the lust of office does not kill ;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy ;
Men who possess opinions and a will ;
Men who have honour, men who will not lie.

(2) We may think of the true man as he in whom the true ideal of manhood has been realised. We have already had this before us in Jesus Christ. Christianity sees in Him the true man in the highest aspects of man’s life. Not man in every possible aspect of humanity ; but man in his essential ethical truth, man as a son of God. His followers recognised in Him the *one* true man which they and all men were meant to be, “the *new* man,” to replace, not merely the sinful man, but also the imperfectly conceived man of pre-Christian thought, who was still too much “after the flesh,” or “the mind,” merely, and not after “holiness of truth.” It was for all who

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believed in Christ to put on this “ new man, which is ever being renewed in full, perfect knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” It is for Christians, of all time, as their highest aim, to seek to make their own this true manhood, and so become “ true men ” in their own experience, before God, and in the world. It is in this that their own and the world’s salvation is to be found ; because it is man as God means him to become. Where the new man is seen in his truth all outward distinctions fall away : “ Where there cannot be,” says Paul, “ Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman ; but Christ is all, and in all.” These were the chief distinctions that divided the old world which Christianity entered. But for those who saw the true man in Christ they were all broken down ; thenceforth there was only man—man as he had appeared in Jesus, man after the Spirit, not after the flesh, man renewed in the image of Him that had created him. In the presence of that vision all other distinctions should disappear as having any real influence over us. Different races and nationalities will remain, different ranks and occupations, different grades of society ; all cannot occupy the same position or do the same work. If society is to continue to exist there must be a great variety of service rendered. But deeper than all external differences there should be the feeling of one common humanity, one great family of God. Before Him

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these social differences are nothing ; He looks only for the true manhood. As Paul put it, we are “ many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Is not this the true Socialism ? It is because we have been so slow to recognise practically this grand Christian ideal that so great separation still exists between men in the world, and that so much privation and suffering have to be endured by many. Notwithstanding all our professions of admiration for Christ, we have not been true to the ideal of manhood that shone in Him, or to the broad humanity of real Christianity. We have not sufficiently thought on and realised that the very purpose of the Divine-human manifestation in Christ was that *all* might be “ renewed in the spirit of their mind ” and “ created after His likeness,” which means after “ the image of God,” so making mankind truly the family of God on the earth.

In “ the true man ” as seen in Christ, *Woman* is, of course, included. As Paul says elsewhere, “ there is neither male nor female.” Woman has her own distinctive natural endowments, her own high functions to perform, her own mission to fulfil. But in Christ she is no longer in a position of inferiority, but has an equal standing with her brother ; the same Divine Spirit that inspires a man is the Spirit of true life in woman also. It is well known that Christianity has done more

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for the emancipation and elevation of woman than any other influence that has affected the world, and if the Christian ideal became more effectually the principle of the lives of men, what remains to be done of that work would find its completion.

Where the new true man is received, there *Christ Himself is*, according to the measure of His reception: "Christ is all and in all." And it is surely plain that if Christ were really living in each man and woman the human world would become all that we can possibly wish it to be. Not only would individuals have in them the power of the true and eternal life, but the world would have living in it that true life which is the one supreme and the only complete source of blessing for it. In this Divinely-given knowledge of the true manhood and possibility of its realisation and manifestation in the world through Christ living in all, a most precious trust has been committed to the Christian Church and a high responsibility placed upon her, to the earnest discharge of which we may well pray that she may speedily awake.

The way in which the one true man in Christ is spoken of suggests the *solidarity of humanity*. It is not only men, but *man* that lives before God. He cares for the individual, but He looks on him as belonging to the race. We may separate ourselves and our interests from our fellows, but before God humanity is *one*. His

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love and salvation are for "the world"—that is, for mankind. It is only as belonging to mankind that the individual can claim a portion in them. It is possible that while ethical perfection—in other words *truth* of spirit and character—are open to the individual here and now, no ultimate perfecting or completion of being can be enjoyed by the individual apart from the race. Individual gains are ultimately for the good of all. Individual gifts are given that "all may profit thereby." We must lose our merely individual life to find it again in the wider and greater universal life. It is thus that the individual is spiritually perfected. We are "true men" only when we can say "nothing that is human is foreign to me."

(3) There is another sense in which we may speak of "the true man," viz., that which St. Paul calls "the inner man" and "the man within." This is still, indeed, the ideal man; but now we have it as more than ideal merely; it is something actually present, living and seeking its full life in us all. It is not always the acting Personality, but that which seeks to inspire and possess it—to identify it with itself. It is this man within that Shakespeare has in view when he says:

This above all—to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

It was to this man within that Jesus appealed. He knew it was there, in publican and harlot and

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outcast, however deeply overlaid by sin and trampled down by the powers of evil. Deepest of all, there was that in every human being which constituted him a child of the Heavenly Father. Jesus was confident of this, and therefore His appeal was not made in vain to many who were despised and neglected by the religious teachers of the time. Self-righteousness, He found, overlaid more deeply this Divine element in man. It was to this inner man also that His Apostles appealed; as Paul wrote: "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This man within was always on the side of God, the holy, the true, the good and right. Even when the acting personality was overmastered by sin in the outer man, the "inner man" consented to the law of God, that it was holy and just and good, willed and wanted to obey it. The man that did wrong was not the true man—the true self—but a self dominated by sin in "the outer man"; so that, said Paul, "it is no more *I* (the true self) that do it, but sin that dwells in me."

The inner world of man's being is a great deep which man himself is unable to fathom. Modern psychology has revealed much of it to us; but all our psychology carries us only so far. Man stands rooted in the animal creation and possesses of necessity an animal nature with its appetites and passions, natural self-seeking and self-centredness. But reason lifts him above the

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animal, and feelings, which in the animal are instinctive and compulsory, become reason-lit and under control. What in the animal are simply natural sex impulses become in him a love which, instead of being merely self-seeking is self-giving and capable of the sublimest sacrifice. There is thus a higher nature super-imposed on the lower, and it is only in obedience to that higher nature that there can be manhood. The acting self sits, so to speak, between the higher and the lower natures, influenced by both and capable of yielding to either. As this self chooses to act, the character is formed. Besides impulses from our own nature, countless influences from without come to us, finding more or less response according as they are able to affect us. The strength of their appeal will depend partly on our individual inherited temperament and tendencies, and partly on how we have formed ourselves. Man is not at the mercy of anything external to *himself* as he forms himself ; he has a power over himself if he will use it. Although these impulses and influences affect and move the acting self, they need not be actually received to be acted on or cherished. They may have the force of "temptations," but they have no compelling power. They can be kept outside, not only of the deeper self—the man within—but outside of the acting self. They are like the thoughts and phantasies that are continually coursing through our minds, but not really ours unless we deliberately make

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them so. Such thoughts, feelings and suggestions have often been the source of much trouble to earnest souls. It is so difficult to distinguish them from our own free thoughts, and the more earnestly the mind has been set on the highest things the more have these lower thoughts seemed to come. They are however, only superficial movements—movements of the *mechanism* of thought and feeling—not welcomed but renounced even when they make themselves felt by us.

There is also in each one of us a deep *sub-conscious* region in which many things are stored up, some of which may occasionally come into the active consciousness. It would seem that *all* our experience is stored up therein, and not only our individual experience, but much of that racial and ancestral experience of which the individual life is the outcome and with which we are continuous. Only that which is of actual present use comes into our normal consciousness, although the whole of the sub-conscious content may yet come into play. In hypnotic and other abnormal forms of consciousness what appears to be quite a new personality may be awakened—the brain centre of the normal personality being for the time in abeyance. There are also experiences in sleep and “reverie,” and to some extent in telepathy, that seem to indicate that there is something in us in contact with the mental world beyond ourselves. There seem to be gaps in the wall that shuts each person in.

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But, still deeper, there is *the true self*. This lies at the foundation of our being, and is always something higher than that which we actually are. It is by no means identical with any "self" that may come into play in abnormal conditions, but one that makes its presence felt in our ordinary consciousness, and that claims us for itself. It is not merely "conscience," and it is more than knowledge; it is feeling and a desire to live, not merely on the lower planes of life but on the highest. It is that vital spark which the mystics taught resided in the deepest depths of each man's being—something Divine, something of God. It is here that we come into touch with the living God—with the God within—and may enter into vital union with God. But the Presence we thus come into touch with is not the blank of many forms of Mysticism, but a living, holy Love that seeks to live in us—to make us one with Itself. It is God as His Spirit is conditioned in our humanity, but which is at the same time one with Himself in His transcendency. It is what some incorrectly term "the Christ within." Better and more truly, according to the mystics, it is the Son of God seeking to be born in us.

The *real problem of life* is to bring the acting self into unison with this deeper, Diviner self. And it is this problem that Christianity comes to solve. According to Christ, each individual is ideally a son of God. To raise us to the realisation

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of this sonship is His aim. The true man is found by us just as this ideal self, this "man within" is suffered to possess us and to become in us the actual living man. But, as Paul found, this inner man is "weak through the flesh," the measure of the Divine Spirit that is thus within us is not in itself sufficient to overcome the opposition it meets with from the lower nature—to overcome it, that is, not by force, such as Omnipotence might exert, but by *spiritual* influences, which alone are here in place. It needs to be re-inforced. And it is this spiritual re-inforcement which comes through "the Holy Spirit," as it proceeds from Christ and His Cross. There a love of God is revealed, which, shed abroad in our hearts, through faith therein, is mighty to win them for God, and to make us "more than conquerors" over all lower influences. In a very real sense Christ is the true self of every man. As Paul said: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that lives in me"; "Christ is all and in all."

(4) In Biblical phraseology "*the heart*" is spoken of as the centre of the personality, the spring of action and source of character. It is there that the determining decisions of life are made, and according to the state of the heart these will be. It is there, in that centre of our being, that the acting self meets both the upward and the downward moving influences and that the response to either is given. Just as in the bodily organism the heart is the spring from whence

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the blood is sent throughout the organism, so of the spiritual life a central organ is conceived out of which it proceeds. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," says the proverb, "for out of it are the issues of life." The man before God is not the man that is seen of men, but the man of the heart: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God seeth the heart." St. Paul speaks of the man "that standeth steadfast in his heart," and who has "power as touching his will, as he has determined in his heart." With a greater than Paul the heart was the central organ of the life. Jesus ever taught that it is to the heart that God looks: "God knoweth your hearts." It is the heart that makes words and actions good or bad before God, so that "that which is highly exalted among men" may be even "abomination before God." If we love God, it must be "with the whole heart"; those who "honoured Him with the lips, while their hearts were far from Him" worshipped in vain. When we forgive a brother, it must be "from the heart." "Out of the heart" proceed all things good and evil. As with the prophet, it was the renewal of the heart that was needed: "An evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit; a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Make the tree good and the fruit will be good." It was when "the good seed" fell into "the good and honest heart" that it should prove fruitful. In the Sermon on the Mount He taught that our affections will carry the heart

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with them, and so determine the life. "Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also." The heart was the eye of the soul; if it was "single," sincere, pure, "the whole body should be full of light"; if "evil," "the whole body should be full of darkness." Righteousness and sin were both of the heart, not of overt acts merely. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." St. Paul prays "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened."

With ourselves, the heart is specially the seat of the *affections*—the well-spring of love. And, although the Biblical idea is wider, including intelligence and conscience, and indeed, the whole inner personality as the source of character, the affectional element is included. The love of God (for us), says Paul, "hath been shed abroad *in our hearts* through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us," thus kindling in us an answering love. Love is the spring of Christian action and the supreme formative influence in Christian character. It is the affections that practically govern the man. What Jesus said was that they determined the *heart*, and hence the life.

A true man from this point of view is he who cherishes and is moved by a true *Love*—a love for God and all that God is, a love for Christ and for the ideal manhood as shown in Him, and through Him made possible for us all, a love for all the children of God, for all men as brethren, a love which, as being the very love of God

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Himself in us, is also the life of that deepest, Divinest self that seeks to live in all men. Love dwelling in and flowing forth from the heart is thus the true motive power ; it is the blood of the soul ; the very life of God in man. When we lose ourselves in love we find ourselves in God. Crucified with Christ, the false man dies and the true man lives, which is really Christ living in us. In this life of love the individual loses his narrower self to find his truer Diviner self, and, through such life in it, the world finds its Divinely-intended Good.

Desire for this Holy Love has been the burden of the prayers and hymns of the most spiritual religion ; although sometimes its *universality* has not been grasped and the experience has been made chiefly a source of personal enjoyment, in consequence of which the life both of the individual believer and of the world has suffered. But, bearing in mind that it is the very love that God is in us, we may well pray with Gerhardt :

O grant that nothing in my soul
 May dwell but Thy pure love alone ;
O may Thy love possess me whole,
 My joy, my treasure and my crown ;
All coldness from my heart remove,
May every act, word, thought be love.

CHAPTER X

THE TRUE JUDGE

“God is Judge Himself.”

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

“He shall judge the world in righteousness.”

“God shall judge the secrets of men.”

“He committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously.”

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.”

“Judge righteous judgment.”

THE Bible is not only the Book of Truth, but, as such, it is the supreme Book of Justice. Righteousness is its theme, strict, impartial righteousness as between man and man and before God. There is no comparable source of ethical inspiration in the world. It is not merely an external righteousness that it demands, but an inner righteousness of the heart and motives. For this righteousness no substitute can be found.

But, at the same time, it sternly discourages man's attempt to sit in judgment on his fellows, affirming that there is one alone who can and who shall judge all in absolute righteousness. “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged,” said the Greatest of all teachers. He knew how prone we are to judge one another, and how liable we are to err in the act, how impossible it is for man

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rightly to judge his brother: "man judgeth according to the appearance, but God looketh on the heart." Jesus Himself was sorely wronged, and made to suffer under man's judgment, but, as St. Peter so finely says, "He committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously."

Of course there are things which we cannot help judging to be good or bad, righteous or the reverse. Otherwise one of man's distinguishing faculties—the knowledge of moral distinctions—would find no exercise. Jesus taught His disciples to distinguish "grapes from thistles," the good fruit from the bad fruit—"by their fruits ye shall know them" *i.e.*, as *teachers*. But this is different from judging the *persons*. We cannot, indeed, avoid forming an opinion of a man's character as that appears manifested to us. To hold in abeyance the capacity of so judging might work fatal injury to ourselves and others. We must be quick to discern "the wolf," even though he comes dressed "in sheep's clothing," and to know Satan for Satan, even if he array himself in the "garments of light."

But this is still different from passing, even in our mind, a decisive and final judgment on a person. God only can do that. Yet we are very apt to pass such judgments on others, forgetting the limitations of our knowledge, our liability to err, and omitting, perhaps, to "take the beam out of our own eye." A person may appear to us offensive, even repulsive, and we

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dislike him, judge and condemn him as something bad, or at least, we say in our hearts : “ there is something decidedly wrong there.” But we do not know what has given him this appearance :

Judge not ! The workings of his brain
And of his heart thou canst not see ;
What looks to thy dim eye a stain
In God’s pure light may only be
A scar brought from some well-fought field,
Where thou wouldst only faint and yield.

The look, the air that frets thy sight
May be a token, that below,
The soul has closed in deadly fight
With some infernal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And send thee shuddering on thy face.*

How very apt we are to pass an unthinking judgment on “ open sinners ”—the drunkard, the harlot, the criminal, and on the wastrel and inefficient. Yet, who knows what has made them such, or what opportunity they have had to be other than they are ? The springs of the personality are hidden from our eyes ; they are many, very complicated, extremely sensitive to influences and far-reaching in their action. Who can say under what hereditary burdens, even with what immoral bias, those whom we condemn have entered the world, what depressing influences have surrounded them from their birth, in what unwholesome environment they have grown, not upward but downward as respects their

* Adelaide A. Procter.

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character. Take the relation to *Drink*, for example. Some children seem to be actually *born* with a liking for strong drink along with that for their mother's milk ; their parents—or one or other of them—are soaked and sodden with drink before their birth ; spirits are given them with their food ; quite young boys and girls early take to strong drink as if it were natural to them. With others who have fallen, remorse is so strong and their condition so hopeless that, as they will tell you themselves, it is only “ the Drink ” that enables them to exist and crawl along their sad way. As long as they can get it—and they will do almost anything to get it—attempts to reclaim them are in vain. Yet we keep open in their midst the places where this tempting, but terrible enemy to their humanity is sold to such poor fellow-creatures, and draw a large portion of our national revenue therefrom. Others, still, become so weary and discouraged and meet with so little sympathy and help from those who *could* help them if they would, that in a weak moment they fly to that deceptive comforter to “ keep them up ” and, although they may battle hard against it, fall again and again under its subtle power. They are far more to be pitied than blamed. Are they not as much sinned against as sinning ? So with other forms of vice. With the parentage and the influences under which thousands enter the world and live, and the temptations that constantly surround them,

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the marvel is that the results are not far worse than they actually are. Are we not *all* more or less responsible for this state of things? Is it as it ought to be in a *Christian* country?

If we think of those born with a better balanced nature and nurtured under more favourable circumstances—those of whom we say, “they richly deserve their fate,” “they have themselves to blame,” how apt we are here, too, to err in judgment. We have all some elements in our nature more clamant and stronger than other elements; we have each some weak point, and, if we have been preserved in the path of moral rectitude, it may be because we have never been tried or tempted as those whom we are ready to condemn. Our nature has been so much better balanced, or our circumstances have been so favourable, that our weakest strand has not had to bear the strain. No doubt, there *are* those who have mainly themselves to blame, those whose conduct and even character merit condemnation. But *we* can never certainly tell who are such: only He who “judges the secrets of men” can do so. As one who knew his own weakness only too well, and who, perhaps, we may think, did not sufficiently guard himself from the influences to which he was so susceptible, has written,

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each string, its various bias.

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Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it ;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

One very common form of judging, even on the part of religious people, has been that of others who differed from them in some point of creed or practice, or who were not able to profess adherence to any accepted creed. It is not wrong, of course, to hold firmly to and advocate earnestly what we believe to be true and right, and to say what we believe to be the natural tendencies of an opposite opinion ; but to deem our brother who *honestly* differs from us less worthy in the sight of God is to assume an attitude far above our right. We know how faithfully St. Paul dealt with such judgments in the early Church : “ Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? to his own Lord he standeth or falleth. But thou ! why dost thou judge thy brother ? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more.” Even should your brother seem to you an infidel, an atheist, but not a scoffer, judge him not. God sees deeper than you can do. He may see in his heart feelings more in harmony with Himself than in some who can glibly recite a seemingly perfect creed. Even should he be a scoffer, you do not know what has made him such.

There are few more comforting thoughts than this, that there is One who knows everything, who sees deeper than man sees, who will judge the

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world and each individual in it righteously. In one aspect, indeed, this just judgment is always taking effect. It is not according to what is outward that our real good is found ; it is found in the inner realm of personality and character. Evil is followed by evil ; sin deepens into sinfulness ; by all wrong doing, thinking and desiring the character is deteriorated and the personality rendered false. Mere earthliness and selfishness lead to the loss of whatever " soul " there may be or might have been. But true as this is, it does not go to the root of the matter. Man is ideally a child of God. If God is the righteous judge who knows everything that has gone to the making of the personality in its very basis or ground, He may see adventitious elements there for which the individual was not responsible :

He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each string, its various bias.

Without such " tone " or " bias " the person might have been very different. He knows also the influences under which the personality was placed, the evil influences that operated upon it, the weakened will-power of resistance, and the absence, it may be, of the good and uplifting influences under which, had they been present, the character might have been quite other than it is. He knows all this, and doubtless makes allowance for it in His just judgment. Not only so ; He loves us all to begin with ; He is " our

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Father," and He loves us all to the end. There is something of *His own* in the depths of each personality, something which—may we not say with certainty—cannot be wholly lost. For we see it come to life again when to all outward appearance it had been entirely gone. Deep in the human heart there is a power of recovery, if only the hindering elements are removed and the deepest springs of life reached and brought into action. This is true even where the individual may appear most blameworthy and responsible. For all, surely, the great word stands for ever true: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." If God be the "Love that will not let us go," then, surely, no human being is utterly hopeless.

This thought of the righteous Judge supports our *belief in Immortality* on two grounds:

(1) We cannot but feel deeply the necessity for a just judgment on all the actors in this mundane life. It is certain that such just judgment is not made manifest in the sphere of time, and on the field of sense. But man in his personal being belongs to a world above time and sense. Wherever there is manhood, there is a spiritual existence which rises out of all that is of Nature and mechanism merely, something which, however little exercised, has the spring of life within itself. All our actual life is lived, all our deeds are done, all our thoughts conceived, our feelings cherished, our characters formed in relation to a higher

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realm than nature, an ethical and spiritual realm, which is the abode of God and the seat of just judgment. We are therefore bound to believe that in that realm the just judgment of God shall be manifested.

(2) The fact that the world is God's creation and human beings His children, while there are multitudes that have no real possibility of rising into that life which the Eternal Love designs for man, leads us to believe that life in this world, where the individual is so often the bearer of the sins of others, the hopeless victim of circumstances, and of the wrong-doing or neglect of his ancestors and of his fellows, cannot be the whole of life for anyone. We feel that we must hope, not only that

In a world of wider scope,
What here is faithfully begun
Shall be completed, not undone.

but that

somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt and taints of blood.

In days not so far distant such hopes were deemed heresy, and those who entertained them were often judged to have some moral taint wilfully cherished within themselves. We cannot be too thankful that to-day nearly all thoughtful men and women in all the Churches are ready to say of such a hope :

Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul ?

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And if " God and Nature " seem still " at strife," we are coming to see how shallow our knowledge even of Nature is, how far we are from fathoming her depths, how wide and far the Divine working extends in realms as yet invisible, and how unceasing it is, how infinite, indeed, is the great ocean on which we have been launched, how infinite also is the love and power that has given us being—may we not also say, how infinite in its potency is " the soul that rises with us, our life's star," that " cometh from afar . . . from God who is our home " ? After all that we see and consciously experience; after all that by our deepest searching we can find out, we cry with Job of old : " Lo ! these are but the outskirts of His ways ; and how small a whisper do we hear of Him. But the thunder of His mighty deeds who can understand ? " Behind that thunder there is, indeed, the Eternal Righteousness with its just judgment; but it is *one* with the Eternal Love :

With me dwells no relentless wrath
Against the human race ;
The souls that I have formed shall find
A refuge in my Grace.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRUE HEREAFTER

“Great is your reward in Heaven.”

“Thy will be done as it is in Heaven.”

“There is joy in Heaven.”

“In my Father’s House are many abiding-places.”

“To depart and be with Christ.”

“I saw Heaven opened.”

“Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”

“Their works do follow them.”

MORE than once in previous chapters our thoughts have been led to the life beyond death. What can we say about the “true hereafter?” Not much with certainty. Yet there are some “things that are true” that we may discern concerning it, on which we should do well to “think” earnestly.

Who does not feel at times keen regret for the loss of the simple, unquestioned belief of our earlier days, when the pictures of the book of Revelation stood out for us with a reality like that of those in tableaux vivants ; when we sang without doubt or misgiving :

There is a happy land
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.

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It did not matter that it was "far, far away" it was *there*, there for us and for those who were no longer with us on earth, and the song of our hearts was this: "What shall it be to be there!" Those blissful visions have been dispelled for many of us. They were, indeed, those of a Christian "prophet," and they *may* have in them deep elements of truth. But there is no use in denying that we cannot now look upon them as we once did; they are mixed with representations which it is difficult to regard as being those of reality. "Where is heaven?" is a question which has first started doubt in many minds; where are we to locate those scenes of blissful enjoyment—that city with the golden streets, and the crystal river, and the pearly gates? It may be in some other planet of that boundless universe, which is the unfolding of infinite possibilities; or heaven may be localised in some way in the ethereal realm; but we cannot so picture it to ourselves that it shall become real to us.

For not a few, belief in any future at all has been shaken. But as Christians we cannot let it go. If we believe in a Christ who has any ultimate value for our life, we must believe in one who has triumphed over His foes, "who was dead, but is alive for evermore." No other Christ can be the Lord and Saviour, to whom our hearts can go out with perfect confidence and who can meet our need. No other Christ can give us the hope that is necessary to sustain our souls and complete

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our trust. Nay, if we believe in a God who loves His children, we must also believe that death, which came in as an agency to further life, cannot remove God's children farther from Him, but must bring them nearer and raise them higher. If there be no hereafter, there is no permanent value in our religion. It becomes at last a great disappointment. If for a time it serves to lift us high, all the darker is the deep into which it leaves us again to sink. But, if God is and if there is any ultimate meaning in our life (as surely there must be in a reason-ordered world in which a Christ died for our sakes), immortality is a certainty, however little we may be able to realise its possibility. We are, alas, more pagan than Christian in our view of death and in our attitude toward it. Our habitual feeling and conduct in this respect are unworthy of those who profess to believe that Jesus died and rose again, that He "was dead and is alive for evermore, having the keys of death and of Hades," that to depart from this life is to go to be "at home with the Lord." As Christians—as believers in God—we ought to be witnesses for immortality, and live and die in the power of faith therein. It is a matter of *faith*, not of sight; necessarily so if our characters are to be truly developed and self-interest as a motive excluded. If we had more of the confidence of the early Christians and martyrs, and showed it in our attitude to death, we should not only be greatly blest ourselves, but should help

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to make the world a brighter place to live and die in. Even though we knew nothing of the condition of life in the unseen, we should be able to hear at times that

Sentinel,
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

Although Jesus lived in the unbroken confidence of the eternal life and brought "Life, even incorruptibility to light," He does not in His teaching profess to give definite information concerning the life beyond. We find Him speaking with assurance of a *Heaven* above and beyond this world, in which the reward of the righteous awaited them, where our treasures may be safely bestowed, where the angels are ever in the presence of God, where there is joy over each repenting sinner. But where it is He did not tell us, nor did He give such information as would enable us to realise the conditions of the life therein. Here again arises the question how far in the forms of His teaching He simply adopted those of His time as He certainly employed its language. He certainly believed in and taught the reality of a higher and eternal world. But He also spoke of the "*resurrection of the righteous*," which suggests the placing of the scene of the future life in a renovated earth. There would be great changes, however, in the mode of life; neither marrying nor giving in marriage; men should be "as the angels in heaven." According to the fourth

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Gospel, He said more definitely : “ In my Father’s house are many mansions (or abiding-places), if it were not so I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you.” The fact that we meet with this saying, or reflections of it, elsewhere ascribed to Jesus, suggests that it is probably a genuine utterance of His; but in the present state of critical opinion regarding this Gospel we have no certainty; and it is accompanied by the statement, “ I will come again and receive you unto myself,” which looks like a suggestion of that outward “ second coming ” which the Church for long clung to, but which, in the form in which it was held, has become unreal for us. However, all these outward conceptions have underlying them spiritual truth, and Jesus certainly taught us to look forward to a life beyond, which—wherever its scene lay—should be the fulfilment of this present life—a life for which, with its higher service, we are now being prepared. This was the great thing to seek and to live for. To the man faithful in a little here, much would yet be entrusted; the meek should yet “ inherit the earth,” and the loyal servant enter into “ the joy of his Lord.” Those who stood by Him in His temptations should reign with Him in the Father’s kingdom. These were the thoughts that comforted saints and martyrs, and they may well comfort and sustain our own souls to-day. There is a deeper truth in them than literalism perceives. And, as we have seen, Jesus preached

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the reality of this life in the eternal Kingdom of God as His Gospel.

St. Paul believed in a higher realm of life in which Christ lived, so that while we are "at home in the body" we are "absent from the Lord," and "that it is better to depart and be with Christ" than to toil and suffer here. He not only believed in that unseen world, but was confident that from it Jesus had manifested Himself to him; nay, that he had been actually caught up into it and there heard things impossible to be uttered in human speech. But this was in a trance, and the solid ground of Paul's belief must be settled by the answer to the question what is possible to be experienced in trance-conditions, how far the visions beheld therein are veridical.

All we can say is that Christ and His Apostles had no doubt or mis-giving about Heaven, however little information they may have given us concerning it. And if we believe in God as a personal Being we must also believe that there is an unseen world wherein life is not only real but perfect. We are not able to picture it, but we cannot doubt its reality. If in this light, we ask where Heaven is, we are brought back to the child's answer, "Heaven is where God is." Of course, as Jesus taught, God is everywhere; but He is not everywhere equally manifest. Heaven, we may well believe, is not only begun within the soul, but is everywhere around us, since God is everywhere around us. But as His

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presence does not belong to the world of time and space, but to an eternal super-sensible world, out of which proceeds all that is visible and extended, so do the presences of those who live with God. They are still finite spirits, although the infinite may lie before them. What marks them off from God we cannot tell. They may live with Christ in God as individual thoughts live in our minds with some degree of separate life, and with, as telepathy suggests, some such relation to a medium of expression and conveyance as enables mind to act on mind, at least, at a distance. They may find embodiment in the invisible ether which is practically omnipresent, and is for us unfathomable in its potentialities, to only a portion of which our present senses are attuned. Or they may, as some reputable thinkers believe, find birth or embodiment again in some planet. What possibilities of communion with us who are here still wrapped in flesh and blood, or even of manifestation, there may be we know not ; these are questions of experience and of evidence. That there are no such possibilities we dare not affirm ; rather, as far as the evidence goes, we must believe the opposite. Here we must let it rest. But this we may be sure of ; the true heaven is life in God, with Christ, in a realm above time and deeper than space. To doubt such a goal of life is to doubt, not only the continued existence of Christ, but the reality of God, and to take away all ultimate meaning from a

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universe which in a material form cannot be eternal. The perfection of the human race on the earth is impossible; only that of a few surviving members of it at the best. Although the perfecting of human life on the earth, so far as attainable, must be the aim we have before us as regards this present world, any perfect life for *humanity* as a whole must be found in the unseen and eternal.

And what more do we need than the thought of that life in God—the entrance into that fuller life which is “hid with Christ in God”—and to be able to think of the departed one as “that friend of mine who lives in God”? “How beautiful to be with God—with God—with God!” was the last connected sentence that Frances Willard uttered. How beautiful indeed:

We know not what we shall be, but are sure
The spark once kindled by the eternal breath
Goes out not quite, but somewhere doth endure
In that strange life we blindly christen death;
Somewhere he is, though where we cannot tell;
But wheresoe'er God hides him it is well.

What has been said of the old belief in heaven is still more true of that in *hell*. We know the horrible forms in which hell was pictured in the past, in which it is safe to say that no Christian man or woman really believes to-day. It has been a long and hard fight that against the hell of the old theology as the scene of fiery and for ever hopeless punishment; but the victory has at length been gained. We are in danger now of

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going to the other extreme of ignoring the possibility of any future punishment at all.

The teaching of Jesus on this subject was long misunderstood. Now that we realise that He employed the language and forms of His time in this connection, we see things differently. He certainly spoke frequently and sternly of hell as "the Gehenna of fire," where "the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched," and warned men earnestly lest they should find a portion in it. There is certainly something to fear and to avoid. But these forms of speech cannot be interpreted literally; the imagery is that of Isaiah, and the scene is pictured on the earth. The "eternal fire" is one that will not cease to burn till it has done its work. What that work shall be in the experience of the sinner, spiritually regarded—for we cannot surely think that Jesus had burning *bodies* in view—is a question which, perhaps, we cannot with certainty answer. Sometimes the imagery may seem to suggest the final extinction of the sinner; but it may rather mean the destruction of his sin, through suffering instead of through the grace and earthly discipline he has rejected. The punishment and the life are both described as "eternal." But, as already remarked, the scene is laid *on the earth* and the word used by Jesus means simply "of," or, "pertaining to the æon or age." It is the judgment, with its punishment and reward, "at the end of the age" He is picturing. At other times

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He speaks of degrees in punishment, of life in Hades, and of the resurrection of the "righteous" only. As with heaven, we have really no definite, unmistakable teaching from Christ on the subject. But the "loss of the soul," or "life" was something to be feared—a very real possibility, only to be avoided by a death to the lower self. Through a merely self-regarding life a man may lose what "soul" he has, or, through failing to seek to rise to it, he may come short of that higher life he is created for. It is to be feared that this is what many are doing in the world every day.

St. Paul never refers to future punishment save as at the last judgment *on the earth*. He simply leaves the sinner, who has died, in "death," without any resurrection. The "eternal life" is with him something that must be "laid hold on," and won by "patient continuance in well-doing." Existence after death does not in itself ensure the entrance on the eternal life to which Christ calls us to rise. There are conditions that must be fulfilled in our experience if that life is to be ours. It depends on our having the Spirit of God and of Christ as the spirit of our life here; without that as our "vital principle" we must fall short of it. For aught we know there may be conditions on which even continuance of being depends. Belief in a future life does not necessarily imply that *all* shall enter on it.

There are some who still hold the belief in "the sleep of the soul" and in a general resurrection at

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the end of the world. Of course, the moment of awaking would be for such "sleeping" souls the moment after death, and meanwhile they would "rest in peace." But it is difficult to see why, if there be a soul that can sleep, it could not also be awake. And it seems only possible to believe in a general resurrection in a form quite different from that of the early Christian belief. A general awaking, in some form, of all that have lived is possible when the present cycle of life has reached its culmination. And it is also possible that only then shall the individual be fully perfected.

We cannot dogmatise on these subjects. We can only say with Abraham of old: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

But, as we saw in the last chapter, both justice and mercy seem to require *a general continuance of life*, although there may be some who are excluded from it. Many have had no opportunity of rising to a higher life, and many have had no actual reaping of the harvest they have sown in time for themselves. Each person is a real spiritual being who, whatever life he enters, does so as he has formed himself. In this light we can have little doubt as to what the true hell is. As heaven is here, so also is hell here within ourselves. We know it is that which we form for ourselves by our neglect of opportunities, by the evil we have done, the characters we have formed with their ghostly memories and their Nemesis of hopeless

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remorse. Still, here, in this life, we are never utterly hopeless :

Long as the lamp holds on to burn
The greatest sinner may return.

There is mercy for the worst, restoration for the deepest fallen, fresh health for the most depraved. To be shut up within one's self, with the knowledge of the evil we have done and of the good we have missed, with no hope, would be the most dreadful hell we can imagine, whatever outward form our being might take or wherever we might be located.

If such a condition be possible, can it ever be *permanent*? Is there *no hope* for such a soul beyond this present life? Jesus, we remember, spoke of "an eternal sin," a sin for which He said there was no forgiveness "either in this age or in the age to come." This seems to imply that in His thought other sins might find forgiveness beyond this life. The unforgivable sin was really at bottom such an absolute renunciation of God as separated the sinner by his own wilful act, persisted in, from the God of forgiveness. But if the sinner cannot get wholly away from God, there must always be hope. For God never changes: "His mercy endureth for ever"; "After two days He will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up." To say that character becomes absolutely fixed is contrary to our experience in this life where we sometimes see the worst reclaimed. To suppose that there is no possibility of change, of progress, of salvation,

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in the life beyond contradicts the very grounds we have in the mercy and justice of God for believing in a continued life for all. If life is continued, it must be with a view to the education and salvation of those who live. Besides, the purpose of God in His creation cannot surely fail, however much there may be against it. If God is in the beginning, must He not also be in the end, "God all and in all," the Omega as well as the Alpha of His creation? In the work of Christ there is a basis for universal redemption and the manifestation of a love which is able to effect it. We certainly cannot be saved by compulsion, or by any power apart from ourselves. But it is the *Love* of God that is His supreme power. And if God be Almighty Love, there is no soul that can permanently resist Him.

Still, with respect to all this we must say,

We have but faith, we cannot know.

Evidently we are not meant to know, doubtless for wise and good reasons. The one thing certain is that whatever future we have we form it for ourselves. St. Paul's terse saying affirms here "the thing that is true": "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap"; and the harvest shall be according as he has sown "to the flesh or to the Spirit":

Men must reap the things they sow;
Force from force must ever flow.

Nor is there a gulf between the present and the future, or even the smallest break between

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them. We *seem* to be confined within a bodily organism here, and we wonder where the self shall go when that organism decays. We witness, perhaps, a gradual lessening of all the powers, one faculty after another becoming atrophied, and we ask, what is there left to enter another life? We forget that the *self* that each one of us is, and that we are constantly forming, is not some material thing within the brain, wholly dependent on its varying condition. Before—and apart from—our normal consciousness, that which ultimately appears as the conscious self has built up even the brain. The brain is the organ or instrument of a self that is *spiritual*, not material, not belonging to the world of time and sense, incapable of being weighed or measured, or described by any of the attributes of matter or space. We may be conscious or unconscious in our relation to this outer world; but the self is there all the same, and, on the conditions of its manifestation returning, shows itself again. If those conditions wholly fail us in death, there is no reason for thinking that the self which manifested itself through them has perished, or that other conditions of manifestation in another sphere may not belong to it. In our spiritual selves we are already living and acting beyond our bodies and brains, in a spiritual and eternal world, building up ourselves in some form daily and hourly therein; what awaits us is to find ourselves actually there as we have formed ourselves. The question

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at the last is not, What is there within the brain, left behind at death, but what is there in the spiritual world, sent on before? How shall we find ourselves when we wake up to consciousness in that world in which we have been all along, although very faintly, if at all, conscious of it? There is a great truth underlying that Persian allegory which tells of two youths who at death found themselves in the eternal world. One of them was met by a fearsome hag from whom he recoiled with horror; the other by a beautiful maiden who led him through the gates of paradise to the fairest scenes and sweetest enjoyment. Who were these? each youth asked, and to each the answer came: "I am your *self* as you have formed it and sent it on before you." The "true thing" which we need most of all to "think on" in this relation is that we are each one forming ourselves as we shall find ourselves in the hereafter, and as we shall be able to act in the life thereof. The "true hereafter" is that which we make for ourselves.

Sculptors of life we are as we stand
With our souls uncarved before us,
Waiting the hour when at God's command
Our life-dream passes o'er us.
If we carve it then on the yielding stone,
With many a sharp incision,
Its heavenly beauties shall be our own,
Our lives that angel-vision.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRUE GUIDE

“I will put my Spirit within you.”

“They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’; for they shall all know me.”

“The Holy Spirit whom the Father shall send in my name, He shall teach you all things.”

“We have received the Spirit which is of God.”

“The anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man should teach you.”

“Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”

IN this concluding chapter let us ask, how are we to find adequate guidance in our life? How can we know what God means us to be and do? What Guide have we to lead us in the true pathway of life—“the way everlasting”? The answer is that we have God Himself for our Guide by His Holy Spirit within us.

Some would answer these questions by bidding us look to that which has *authority* over us, and much has been recently written on the subject. There is indeed an authority over us all; there must be a supreme Authority for the moral life; but *religion* is more and deeper than morality. If we are to speak of authority, *God* is the one supreme and ultimate authority, and, as was said

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in the opening chapter, the *Truth*, in whatsoever way it comes to us, is His voice to man. There is no authority other than the truth as the word of God for us. To find the truth we must use the reason which God has given us, and we must be loyal to what we know in our conscience to be our duty. We can never believe truly contrary to reason, and we can never act rightly against our conscience. But we must ever seek in both respects fuller enlightenment from all sources that are open to us, and there is something still deeper which we have of God, and which we must cherish and follow.

By Catholics authority is placed in the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*; but, as we have sought to show, to no man has such authority over his fellows been entrusted. By others it is placed in the *Church*; but the Church has to receive her guidance from a source above herself which is as open to others as to her. Some would place it in the general *Christian consciousness*. But, although the consensus of Christian thought deserves the highest respect and the serious attention of all who would call themselves Christians, on no man can it be a binding authority. *Humanum est errare*, and the past history of Christianity shows that on many matters the general Christian belief has not been correct. In the deepest matter of the consciousness of salvation the Christian consciousness is a witness which cannot be

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ignored ; but in matters of belief and duty each man must be free to hearken for and obey the Divine voice for himself. Otherwise there could be no reformation and no advance made in Christian thought. By others again, authority is placed in *the Bible*. The Bible is, and will always be, of the greatest value as containing the record of what God has taught men in the past within the sphere of its progressive revelation. It is not the sole depository of the Word of God ; other peoples have not been ignored entirely ; they too have their Bibles with some rays of Divine Light shining from their pages. And it is surely a great mistake to think that God who spake to men in the past speaks to us no more, especially when the great promise of the Bible is that the time would come when He would speak to *all men* direct, not through prophets only. He is for ever speaking and “slowly,” very slowly, yet most truly, “the Bible of the race” is being writ from human experience. The Bible which is our priceless inheritance is, however, a rich treasury of Divine truth and life, coming through the experience of men, which criticism has not in the least impaired, but only taught us how to use it more intelligently. But coming through man, it contains a large human element, and can only have authority over us in so far as it convinces us of truth. The Old Testament was but leading up to Christ ; the revelation it records reached its culmination in Him, and through Him

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passed beyond itself. Up till then "Moses and the prophets" had spoken; but now the voice from Heaven says, "This is my beloved *Son*, hear ye *Him!*" Everything in the Old Testament must be tested by its agreement with the fuller revelation in Christ. Nothing that is out of harmony therewith is Divinely true. Is *Christ* then our final and absolute Authority? Only so far as He convinces us of His truth. Christ claimed no other authority save that of the truth: "If I speak the truth, why believe ye not what I say?" "For this cause was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." The truth of life also lived in Him, and gives Him authority as the Lord of men. But Christ seeks no blind acceptance or slavish submission from any one. He does not teach us on all kinds of subjects. However, in the highest of all subjects, our relation to God, and the true spirit of life, Christ as the Truth has authority, and no one will go wrong who commits himself unreservedly to Him as his Guide, if at the same time, he recognises His presence in the Spirit. Authority has also been placed in the "*Grace*" manifested in Christ and His Cross. There is a sense in which this is true; for we have therein the supreme revelation of God.

But it is a mistake for Christians to lay so great stress on mere *Authority*. The idea of Authority

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belongs to Sovereignty and Law rather than to Fatherhood and the Gospel. A great part of the battle which St. Paul had to wage in the power of the Spirit of Christ was against those who sought to keep Christians under the authority of "the Law." "But," he contended, ultimately with success, "we are *not* under 'Law,' but under 'Grace.'" The Law was but a tutor to teach and guard men while in their minority; but now in Christ we have got beyond this; "We are all *sons* of God through faith in Jesus Christ." Instead of an outward authority *over* us, we have *our Father's spirit* in our hearts as our Guide. To speak so much about "Authority" is to Judaize once more. It is *inspiration* rather than authority that we have to do with in religion. Authority belongs to the realms of the intellect and morality. Truth and right, even though externally made known, are in these realms authoritative. But for *religion* we must be wholly free from all that is external to our inmost selves, as the children of God in whom His Spirit dwells. What our Heavenly Father seeks is neither slaves nor servants bowing to His authority, but sons and daughters with their Father's very *life* within them as their life; with the law, not outside and above them merely, but *in* them as the principle of their lives, "written on their hearts," sons and daughters who spontaneously love and serve Him, under no compulsion, save "the sweet constraint" of love.

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Authority commands, gives orders as a master to his servants, or laws as a sovereign to his subjects ; but real fatherhood, such as there is in God, can only be satisfied with the free devotion of a love which, naturally, serves the Father, making His will and purposes our own. As we have seen, the freedom with which Christ makes us free is that of sons in the Father's house, whose affairs they feel (as Jesus did) are the things of interest for them : " Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." For ignorant, unwilling, disobedient and refractory children, Authority with its sanctions is necessary ; as Paul said, " the Law is for evil doers," etc. ; but the true child proves his sonship to be genuine just by not needing any such external rule.

A true son of the father is such because the same *life*, the same *spirit*, as that of his father is his spirit and life. It is precisely in this that the *filial* relationship consists. And so, the sons of God are such because the life-Spirit of God is the spirit and inspiration of their life. It is this " Spirit of their Father in them " that is the source of guidance to them in all their life and work. They do not need to look without ; they have only to look within as the nature of the Spirit of God has been made fully known to them in Christ, and His Cross of sacrificial Love. The forthgoing of that Spirit to men was the great thing that came to the world through Jesus Christ—through what He was and what He did on our behalf.

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It was the baptism of His disciples with this Spirit that *made* the Christian Church and sent Christianity forth as a Divine Power into the souls of men. The New Testament is full of rejoicing references to the presence and effectual guidance of that Spirit. "We have received," says Paul, "not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." "Ye who began in the Spirit," he writes to the Galatians when the Judaisers were seeking to bring them again under the Law, "are ye to be perfected through the flesh?" All that was outward merely was for St. Paul of "the flesh" only. "Ye have," says St. John, "an anointing from the Holy One, and need not that any man should teach you." This did not make them infallible or set them above the need of using their reason and of learning many things, and they were not immediately led by the Spirit into all kinds of truth or into the whole truth. But as respects what was deepest and most essential for their true *life* and needful for their service of God in Christ at the time, the Spirit of God effectually taught them. Within that sphere they could distinguish without doubt between truth and error. They found, in a word, the promises of Christ fulfilled in their experience: "the Holy Spirit shall teach you"; "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth—the Holy Spirit whom the Father will

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send in my name, He shall teach you all things, He shall guide you into all the truth." They were conscious that the Holy Spirit had come to them. It was "the Spirit of sonship," said Paul, opposed to that of "bondage" under the Law: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty"; "As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God." They went forward with the glad confidence of sons in the Father's house, inspired to live in love and to work for the cause of God and man in the world, believing that the Spirit that was in them was also the "earnest" of a fuller life to come.

But, although in one aspect the Holy Spirit came to men through Christ, it was at the same time a revelation of the nature of that Spirit of God which is deepest in every man's life, seeking to possess us and lead us onward and upward. It was the same Spirit which in the history of the Jewish people had been moving towards its full expression in Christ: "the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of prophecy." The Holy Spirit did not come into existence for the first time in Christianity. It had been active in men's hearts throughout the whole of the past, not in Israel only but in other nations, although it was only gradually that it could make itself known to men in its true character; there was so much of "the flesh," or lower nature, to be overcome. But it was *there*, the deepest Spirit of man's life; all that was true and good was due to its inspiration.

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The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind,
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.

What we have in Christ is *the full disclosure of its nature as the Spirit of Holy Love and Truth*, and its embodiment in His person as its supreme organ in the world. Seeing this manifestation in Christ, opening their hearts to the God revealed in Him, men found in their experience that this Spirit was a reality within them, and the discovery filled them with holy confidence and joy—"joy in the Holy Spirit," and with a new sense of power. Watching the movements of the Spirit within and ready to obey, they found themselves guided aright—led to seek and follow truth and love, guided into essential truth of thought and life, directed and sustained in their personal activities. The Spirit in them was Christ Himself in them.

Now, this Spirit, Jesus said, should "abide with us *for ever*." As the Spirit of God it must do so. This is the culminating and permanent gain to the world from the Divine manifestation in Jesus Christ—what God in Him has given us—the knowledge and experience of His own indwelling; and *this* we ought to guard as our most precious possession. Questions of the past are no doubt important; but *the present Spirit of God* is the supreme and abiding reality—that with which we have directly to do. It is this which

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is open to all who draw nigh to God as He draws nigh to us in Christ. Of course, if we do not believe in its reality, we cannot realise its presence. But not to believe in this indwelling, teaching, guiding Spirit of God as being deepest of all in our life, and coming to us in the fulness of its manifestation and power in Jesus Christ, is not only to fail to understand what Christianity really is, but to leave our lives Godless at their centre.

It is in the presence and leading of this Holy Spirit that we can have the *guidance* that we need in our entire life and work in relation to God. It will be said that men believing that they were following the Spirit's guidance have often erred, even grievously, such as the Anabaptists of Münster, the brethren of the free spirit in Germany and other more modern examples; that to surrender ourselves to the Spirit's guidance is to leave ourselves open to all manner of delusion. Ignoring or forgetting the nature of the Holy Spirit, men have indeed often erred. But no one has ever fallen into error who has sought sincerely to be led by the Spirit *as the nature of the Spirit has been made known in Christ*, or as it proceeded in its truth and power from Him. This alone is the Christian Guide, and Christianity is not responsible for what men following some other spirit have said or done. Where the Church and individual Christians have erred has been in *not* following the leading of that Spirit. Every kind of error in doctrine and practice can be traced

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back to that. What is needed to-day and all that is needed for the guidance of the Church in general, and of each individual in particular, is to bring *everything* into harmony with the Holy Spirit of God and of Christ.

Following the teaching of that Spirit—not in idle indifference to the proper use of our intelligence, but as our supreme Guide—we shall be gradually led “into all the truth.” By accepting its inspiration and guidance in our life—not in the neglect of the principles of morality or the dictates of reason, but as that which makes us feel what is highest, holiest and best—we shall find ourselves rightly moved and Divinely led in all our activities. There is *nothing* true and good within the range of human thought and action which is apart from the inspiration of that Spirit. Under its teaching, or rather, we should say, in its very presence, the false distinction between sacred and secular falls away, and *the whole life*, with all our human powers and faculties, all our interests, business and enjoyments, becomes founded deep in, inspired and guided by, and in harmony with, the Spirit of God. This is the life of true religion, the life of God in man. And it is as the supreme stress is laid on that *Spirit* as the essential and abiding reality in Christianity—one with the deepest Spirit of every man’s life—that the present seeming revolt from religion can be stayed and Christianity become once more the supreme power in human life. If we would

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see Christianity revived, it must be as *the religion of the Spirit*.

Of course, there is no sensuous feeling of the presence of that Spirit to be looked for. Sometimes there may be a deep and blessed consciousness of its reality ; but at other times it may seem wholly absent. It is *Spirit*, and it is *Holy Spirit*. "The Temple of God," says St. Paul, "is holy, which Temple ye are." As Thomas Goodwin remarks, that the Holy Spirit of God will come to dwell in our hearts, where there is so much that is contrary to Holiness, is a greater marvel than even the Incarnation. God, not only as Jehovah but as "our Father," is "a jealous God," jealous, just because He loves us all so much and seeks us for His own. It is not, however, to an unnatural asceticism that we are called, nor to a withdrawal of ourselves from the life of the world in any of its proper human interests. On the contrary, the Spirit of God seeks to inspire the world's life in every aspect of it, and through those in whom He finds a dwelling-place to act upon it. But the heart in which He dwells must be firmly decided for God, as distinguished from "self" and "the world," yielded up to God, and kept pure and sincere before Him. It is only in this way that "self" and "the world" can be brought into real unity with God.

While this Holy Spirit is *within* us, we need so to cherish and obey it that it shall dwell in us effectually and become in its impartation our own

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actual spirit. While it is not *of* us it becomes *in* us the spirit of sonship, the spirit of love and truth, of all righteousness and goodness, the spirit that unites us to God and to all mankind, the very spirit of Christ Himself. The Holy Spirit becomes in us the spirit of prayer, of constant dependence on God, of continual looking to and longing for Him. We do not pray *for* the Spirit, but *in* the Spirit and that we may be *filled* with the Spirit. Life in the Spirit is the life of “prayer without ceasing,” whether uttered in words or not. The Spirit itself, as Paul says, prays within us; it is the Spirit that inspires our prayers, and teaches us “what to pray for as we ought.” Prayer in the Spirit is always effectual prayer, whether it be for ourselves or for others, for it is always “according to the will of God.” It is in the Spirit that we are brought into union with God. As the Spirit of Christ within us it brings us also into loving fellowship with Christ: “he that is joined to the Lord,” says Paul, “is one Spirit,” and we find in Christ the Divine-human Friend, Helper and Saviour that we need in our life. That is, if we have *faith*; and the Spirit “works faith” in us, not credulity but well-grounded faith. Still it *is* faith, going beyond sight, physical and intellectual, and without this faith we cannot experience the full life of the Spirit.

It is because the Spirit of God, which appeared in its true ethical character in Christ, is the Spirit of all true life in man—coming also through Christ

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in saving power—that Christianity can make an effectual appeal to the world, and maintain its position, not only as the highest religion, but as a practicable religion for all mankind. It possesses also in this the power that can unify mankind. It is only as the Spirit of God and Christ becomes our spirit that the Christian ideal can be approached which bids us regard our bodies as the temples of God and our members as the members of Christ. And it is only as that Spirit of the God who created the world and man becomes the accepted principle and inspiration of human life as a whole, that the real unity of humanity will be reached ; that all separations will be broken down, all that divides men and keeps strife and poverty, sin and misery alive be taken away, and mankind become that loving family of God for which He created us and in Christ redeemed us. It is *the spirit* that is deepest, and that must be won for God.

If there be any to whom these seem words only, let them seriously “think” on this: If the world be God’s creation, must there not be a Divine purpose in it and a Divine ideal for it? Is it not only He who created the world and has so far led it onward that can be its Perfecter? And if God is to act in the world, in what other way can He do so save through *us*—by “His Spirit which dwelleth in us?”

As already said it is *in the Spirit* only that the *unity*, which so many are being led by the Spirit

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at this time to desire, can be attained. The purpose for which the Church exists, with the Gospel of God's forgiving love that is entrusted to her, is to "minister the Spirit" of God's holy Love to men, and to unite them therein to God and each other. It is through faith in the Gospel that men come into the full experience of the Spirit, and of life therein. To create and foster and direct that life is the end of all doctrine, and of every form of Church organisation. If our common interest be, as it ought to be, this ministration of the Spirit; if we recognise this to be the great purpose for which the Christian Church exists, why cannot all Christians openly unite on this basis (which is in itself essentially love), while leaving each other perfectly free to hold and preach the doctrines they conscientiously believe to be truest and most efficient, and to carry forward the work of Christ by means of those organisations which they deem the best? Why cannot there be a united and universal *Church of the Spirit*? Once that is reached, "the unity of the faith" will follow. Was it not this "unity of the Spirit" which the Christian apostles advocated, and for which the Lord Himself besought the Father? Did He not pray "that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send me?" Was not that mutual indwelling of the Father and Christ a reality through the one uniting Holy

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Spirit? It was the going forth of that Spirit of God through Jesus Christ and its manifestation in Christians that should be the proof of the oneness of Christ with God, and the means whereby the world should be brought to faith and to unity.

Let us ask as the "conclusion of the whole matter," *What does this Holy Spirit of truth and love teach us?* What does it say as it proceeds from Christ and as it makes its presence felt deep within every heart? *This* is its unmistakable Voice: "Yield yourself up to God; let God possess you; follow truth and live in love." It makes us feel certain that truth is the only sure word of God to man, and that the true life is the life of love. Let truth and love dwell in our hearts, inspire all our faculties, direct all our energies, guide us in all our activities, and we shall be guided aright. It is *here* within us—that Spirit—to guide us into all truth and love, if we will only seek to be so guided, and rightly employ the faculties God has given us; to strengthen and uphold us in our way; in short, to live in us. It leads us to see in Christianity the truth of God and man revealed, the Divine Love incarnate in Christ, finding in His life and Cross its supreme expression, going forth from Him in order to win us to itself—to the God and Father of holy love and truth—in helping and saving fellowship with Him in whom that life in man was realised and in whom it lives for ever. *This is the sum and substance of Christianity.* It is this that we reach

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at last through the Holy Spirit in our hearts. All its doctrines find their value only as they minister to this life of truth and love in man. All that obscures this supreme end or that would turn our attention away from it is of man, not of God. We need no other guidance, and can find none other Divinely given, than that of this Holy Spirit of God and of Christ possessing our hearts and inspiring our thought and action. Neither the individual nor the world can find any other power of salvation than this Christ-inspired life of truth and love which is the life of God in man.

Voice of our God, O yet be near!
In low, sweet accents whisper peace,
Direct us on our pathway here,
Then bid in heaven our wanderings cease.

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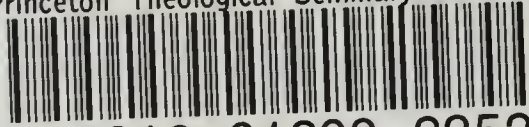
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